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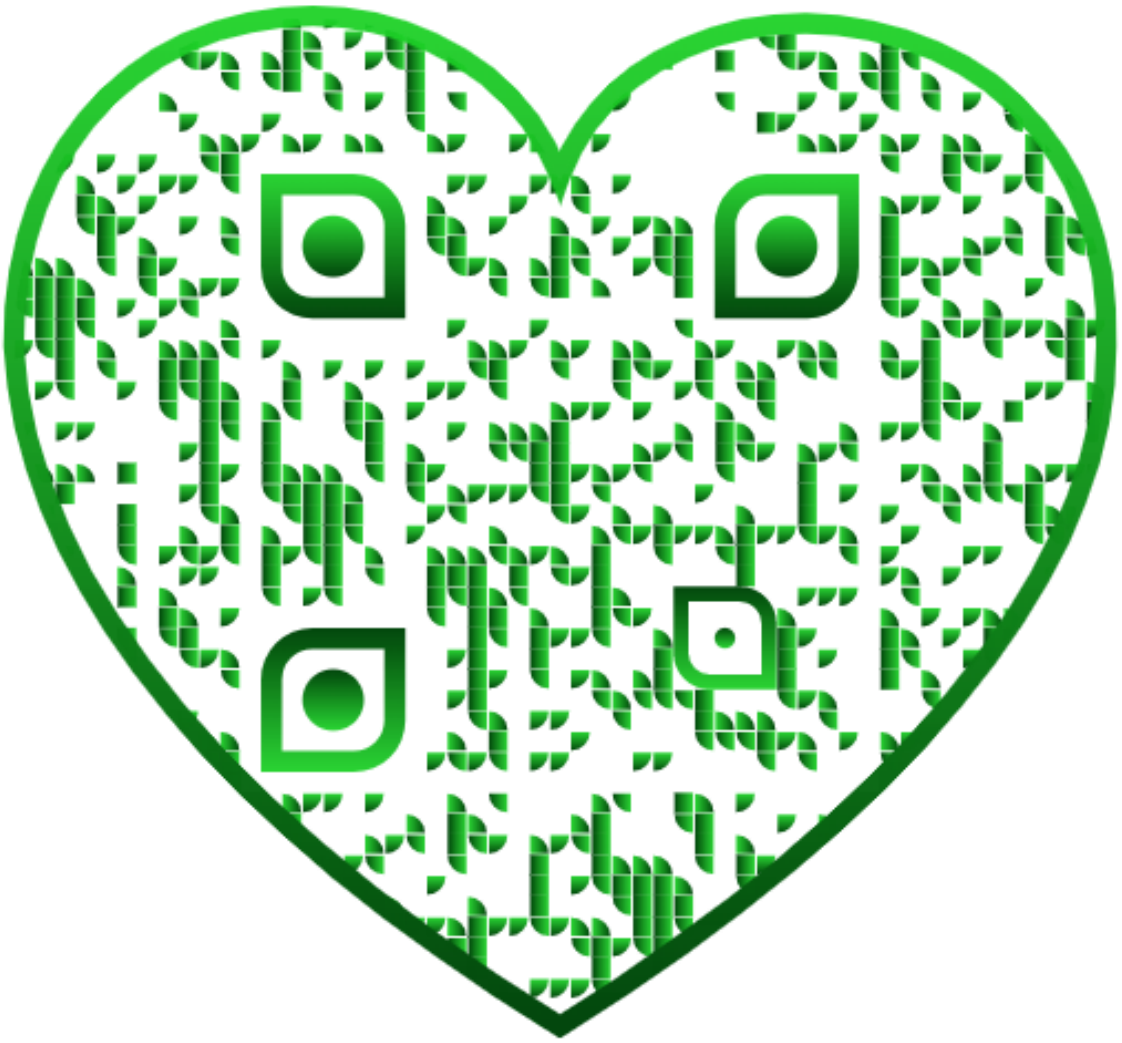

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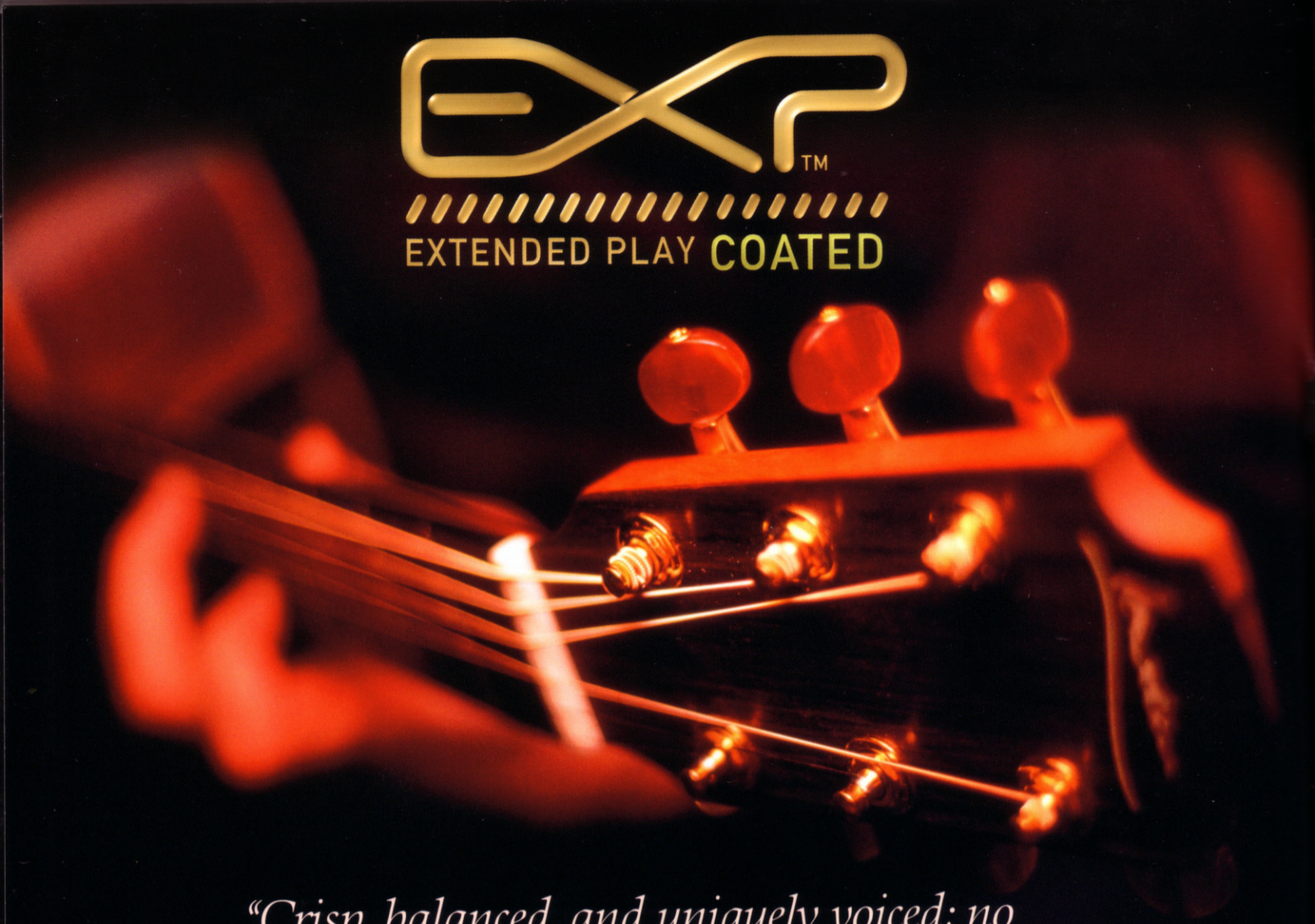

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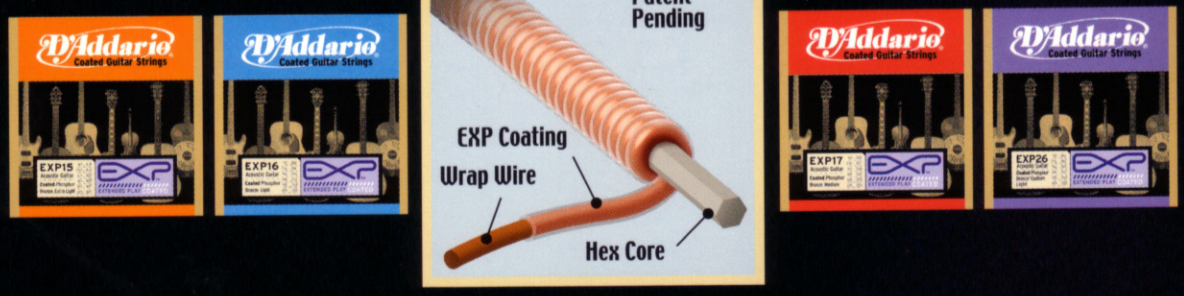

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Dan Miller - Publisher and Editor
Mariann Miller - Sales and Advertising
Connie Miller - Administration
Contributing Editors:
Dave McCarty
Bryan Kimsey
Cover Scan - Jason Hungate

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CONTENTS

FEATURES

Ronnie Reno 4
That Watson Feeling: by Steve Kilby 16
Flatpicking Profile: Mike Dowling 26
Jam Tunes: Steve Palazzo & "Forked Deer" 37
Taylor Liberty Tree Guitar 71
Martin D-18 GE 72

COLUMNS

"Marquis of Huntley" 10
Craig Vance
Beginner's Page: Sharpening Your Ear 13
Joe Carr
Flatpick Rhythm: "Nuages" 14
Joe Carr
Maintenance & Repair: Lowering the Bridge 18
Frank Ford
Kaufman's Corner: "Colored Aristocracy" 21
Steve Kaufman
Adventures in Acoustic Music: Django 202 24
John Carlini
Nashville Flat Top: Reinventing Old Licks 33
Brad Davis
Break Time: Break Intros Part 2 35
Chris Jones
Gypsy Jazz Guitar 41
Paul Mehling
The O-Zone: "Cattle in the Cane" 43
Orrin Star
The Blues: "Frogs for Snakes" 46
Dix Bruce
Music Theory: Mastering the Fingerboard 48
Mike Maddux
Gospel Guitar: Intros and Tags 51
Harold Streeter
Classics For Flatpicking: "Valse" 54
Bill Bay
Flatpicking Fiddle Tunes: "Little Sadie" 56
Adam Granger
Bluegrass Classics: "Think of What You've Done" 59
Steve Pottier
Eclectic Acoustic "Fire Pocket" 63
John McGann

DEPARTMENTS

Reviews 66

How to Duplicate & Promote an Acoustic CD Release

1. **Send your music to radio.** No matter how you define your goals, you need to get your music to folk radio. One excellent way to do this is through a **radio-oriented sampler CD program**, such as the OASISACOUSTIC™ sampler CDs, which get the music of Oasis clients to hundreds of key radio stations throughout the U.S.

2. **Find distribution.** When people hear your music on the radio and want to buy the CD, will they be able to find it? If you make your CD with Oasis, they will. Here's why: Oasis clients automatically qualify for national distribution through Valley Media, the nation's largest full-line distributor. This means your CD is automatically available at all of the biggest Internet music stores: CDnow, Amazon.com, Music Boulevard, TotalE.com, etc. Your CD is also available for special-order distribution in all the big retail chains: Borders, Camelot, etc.

3. **Think "retail-friendly" when packaging your CD.** Your CD needs to look as good as it sounds. While jewel-box packaging is still very popular, as an alternative you may want to consider eye-catching **cardboard substitutes for the jewel box.** such as the patented **Oasis Jewel-Free™ Box**.

4. **Work with a reputable duplication company:**

• **Ask for references.** Who are the company's clients? Do they include artists and labels you respect? (Oasis is proud of our work, for example, with Trout Fishing in America, David Wilcox, Trapezoid, Chris Smither, Brooks Williams, Steven King, Salamander Crossing...)

• **Do they understand your music and your market?** If you're going to Kerrville for the first time, do they understand what this means? If your guitar sounds too tinny, do they know how to fix it? Nerissa Nields (The Nields) says "We love dealing with a company that knows and cares who we are. Oasis is fantastic; they manufactured our CDs in time to make sure we had them for our CD release at the Iron Horse. And the quality is superb."

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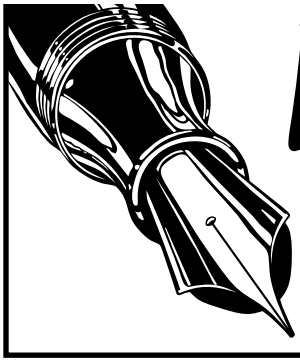


EDITOR'S PAGE

Doc Watson Tribute Project

The big news here at *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* these days is the recent release of our Doc Watson tribute project. It is called *DocFest: A Tribute to Doc Watson and his Musical Partners Merle Watson and Jack Lawrence*. There are eighteen total cuts on this project. Four of them are instumentals and fourteen of them are vocals. We have been working on this project for the past year and I am very proud of all of the contributions that were sent in to us from the artists that participated.

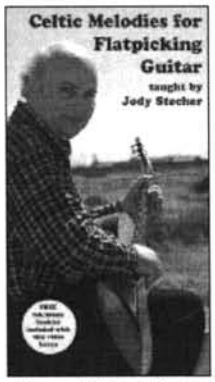
The concept was for the participating artist to choose a song that they were inspired to learn after hearing Doc perform it. I asked each artist to not try and play the song like Doc did it, but to come up with their own arrangement and perform it in their own style. I am very happy with the final results and if you choose to purchase this CD, I don't think you will be disappointed. Here is a list of the artists who participate and the songs that they performed:

Gonna Lay Down My Old Guitar	Doug Rorrer & Steve Kilby
Reuben's Train	Dix Bruce & Jim Nunally
Old Camp Meeting Time	Kenny & Amanda Smith
Deep River Blues	Jim Hurst & Missy Raines
Salt Creek/Bill Cheathum	Wyatt Rice, Tim Stafford & Rushad Eggleston
Alberta/Billy In The Lowground	Orrin Star & Russell Scholle
Train That Carried My Girl From Town	Brad Davis & Whitewater
Way Downtown	John Tindel & RST
Cotton Eyed Joe	David Grier
A-Roving On A Winter's Night	Chris & Sally Jones
The Crawdad Song	Brad Davis & Dan Miller
Rainbow	Steve Kaufman & Roy Curry
Little Sadie	Adam Granger
More Pretty Girls Than One	Craig Vance & Chris Leske
Black Mountain Rag	Steve Pottier & Barry Soloman
The Lone Journey	John McGann & Chris Moore
Southbound	Joe Carr & Alan Munde
Matty Groves	Larry Keel & Rushad Eggleston

The release date for this project is May 1st, 2002. If you would like to get a copy, call us at (800) 413-8296 or visit our Flatpicking Mercantile website at www.flatpickingmercantile.com.

Bluegrass Lead Guitar
taught by Scott Nygaard

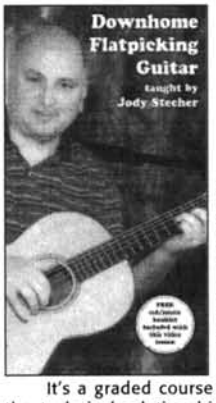
In this video, renowned guitarist Scott Nygaard guides you through the old-time fiddle tune *Little Billy Wilson*, a crosspicking arrangement of *Home Sweet Home*, a melodic solo on the blues song *Trouble in Mind* and shows you how to combine these influences when creating a solo on a bluegrass tune like *East Virginia Blues*. Scott explains in detail the techniques needed to master the bluegrass lead guitar style and the ideas behind his arrangements. All are clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups. ***GW604 $29.95***



Celtic Melodies for Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Jody Stecher

The colorful tones of the guitar are well suited to the music of Ireland and Scotland. Jody Stecher has developed a unique approach to flatpicking Celtic music drawing on the sounds and techniques of the harp, fiddle and pipes. This video lesson presents a graded course starting with simpler fingering with special attention to picking techniques. Building on a base of a confident and deliberate right hand, more challenging left hand work is gradually introduced.

Titles include: ***Reel*** *Sheehan's Reel •* ***Jig*** *The Connaughtman's Rambles •* ***March*** *A Trip To Mabou Ridge •* ***Strathspey*** *The Devil In The Kitchen •* ***Reel*** *Muilleann Dubh •* ***Reel*** *Doctor Gilbert* ***GW605 $29.95***



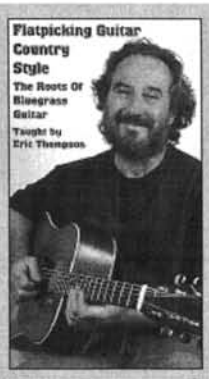
Downhome Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Jody Stecher

Jody Stecher has long been America's least generic flatpicker. This video is both a roadmap of Jody's development as a flatpicking guitarist of mostly American vernacular music, and a guide to how any flatpicker can expand their expressive technique. Think of it as *"Flatpicking According to Jody"*.

It's a graded course starting with basics in which the technical relationship between fingerpicking and flatpicking is made clear. The first few pieces are great songs with memorable melodies but minimal fingering so that right hand fundamentals can be mastered. With each new tune more techniques are introduced and more and more fingerboard is used, both horizontally and vertically. The second half of the video is purely instrumental music and the tunes are more complex.

Titles include: Carter's Blues, It's Hard To Love, I Got A Bulldog, Leake County Blues, Arkansas Traveler, The Dawn and The Ship in Full Sail ***GW606 $29.95***

Flatpicking Guitar Country Style
The Roots of Bluegrass Guitar
Taught by Eric Thompson



Eric Thompson will have you flatpicking lead breaks in styles from Maybelle Carter to Doc Watson. You'll learn to pick out the melody to songs like *East Virginia Blues, Sad and Lonesome Day* and *Shady Grove*. You will learn to embellish your playing with "hammer-ons" and "pull-offs" for the real old-time country sound. You'll build a solid technique, advancing step-by-step through single note arrangements of *Thompson's Rag*, fiddle hoedowns *Arkansas Traveler* and *Soldier's Joy*, and a bluesy bluegrass break for *Good Old Mountain Dew* (employing slippery slides and hot runs). Eric's invaluable tips on left hand fingering and right hand pick technique are clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups.

GW 601 $29.95

Flatpicking Fiddle Tunes
Reels, Rags & Hoedowns
Taught by Eric Thompson

Old-time fiddle tunes are the bedrock upon which acoustic guitar flatpicking is built. Eric Thompson's strong, melodic picking has set a benchmark for taste and tone for nearly four decades. In this video Eric shares soulful arrangements of seven of his favorites, guiding you slowly, line-by-line through classics like *Texas Gals, Fish In The Millpond,* Scottish-Irish rooted *Miller's Reel* and *Stony Point,* mountain modal *Falls of Richmond,* swingin' *Kennedy Rag* and the bouncy *East Tennessee Blues.* You'll build your repertoire and hone your technique, exploring fingering patterns in six different keys which are all clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups. ***GW 602 $29.95***

Bluegrass Crosspicking Guitar
Taught by Eric Thompson

Crosspicking is an exciting flatpicking technique that is an essential part of every bluegrass guitarist's arsenal. Utilizing repeated patterns on three-string groups, crosspicking captures the bounce of a fiddler's double shuffle and the drive of three-finger banjo Scruggs-style rolls. Eric Thompson lays it out for you in easy to understand steps, illustrating the basic patterns with arrangements of *Fly Around My Pretty Little Miss, Blackberry Rag, Beaumont Rag, Wildwood Flower,* and *Cross-eyed Fiddler.* Split-screen close-ups let you see exactly what and how Eric is playing. ***GW 603 $29.95***

Beginner's Country Guitar
taught by Fred Sokolow

All you need to put over a good country song is your voice and a guitar. This video lesson gives you the tools you need to play old-fashioned country, honky-tonk and country rock. You'll learn how to play: Accompaniment strums for different rhythmic feels; a variety of first-position chords; bass runs; major scales; solos and turnarounds.

Tunes include: Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain, I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry, The Bottle Let Me Down, I'm Movin' On, Will The Circle Be Unbroken, Silver Wings and Jambalaya, ***GW407 $29.95***

Flatpicking Country Classics
taught by Fred Sokolow

In this 75 minute video Fred teaches nine standards every country picker/singer should know... from start to finish. You'll learn an intro for each song, a backup pattern and bass runs to play while singing, an instrumental solo, and an ending. Picking up where his *BEGINNER'S COUNTRY GU1TAR* video left off, Fred keeps the arrangements fairly simple but includes a few up-the-neck chord positions and hot licks. You'll learn solos and runs in five different keys. Each song is played at regular speed and then slowed down on a split-screen that gives you a close-up look at the picking hand and the chording hand.

Tunes include: New San Antonio Rose, Wild Side of Life, Waltz Across Texas, The Race is On, Beautiful Kentucky Waltz, That's the Way Love Goes, I Don't Hurt Anymore, Someone I Used To Know and City of New Orleans ***GW410 $29.95***

Basic Country Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Dix Bruce

Hot guitar licks abound these days but simple melodies played along with chord strums on the low strings of the guitar have never lost their appeal. Pioneered in the 1920s by the great Mother Maybelle Carter, this combination of lead and rhythm guitar playing is the foundation upon which all traditional country, folk, bluegrass, and hot flatpicking guitar is based. In this video lesson Dix Bruce carefully teaches lead and backup guitar to nine great and classic country, bluegrass, and folk standards, ballads and hot breakdowns played by musicians the world over.

Tunes include: Worried Man Blues, Lonesome Valley, Storms Are On the Ocean, Handsome Molly, Wildwood Flower, Redwing, John Hardy, Jimmie Brown the Newsboy ***GW308 $29.95***

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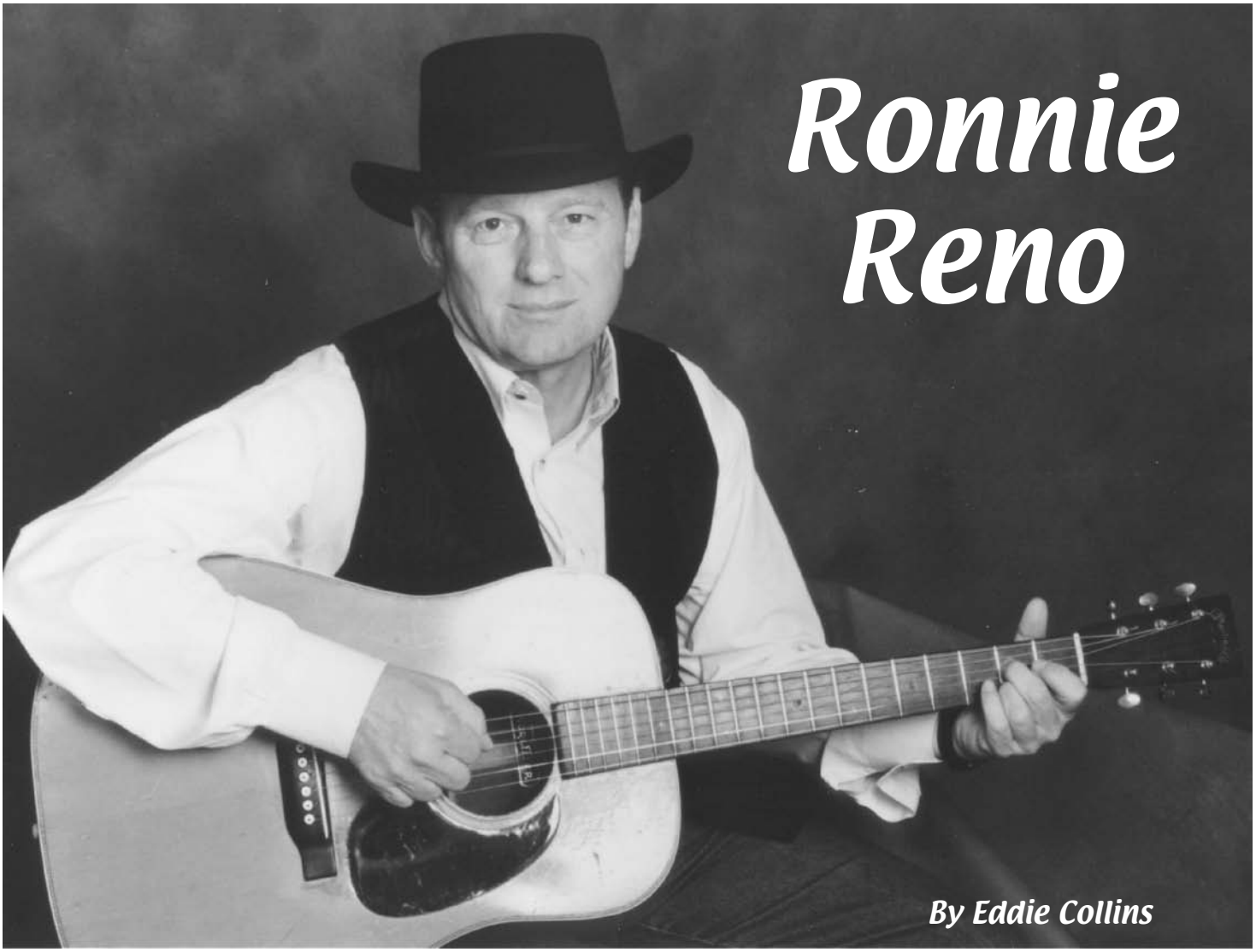

Ronnie Reno

By Eddie Collins

The Tradition Continues

First-generation bluegrass great Don Reno, while known for his distinctive banjo style, helped future generations see the guitar not only as a rhythm instrument, but one that could step out on leads as well. The public was generally unaware of Don's prowess on guitar since his recorded output centered around his 5-string banjo playing. Although he went into Nashville's King Records Studio in 1972 with the intent to record an album of flatpicking guitar instrumentals, the project was never released and nearly forgotten. The original 15 cuts, with Buck Ryan on fiddle and Bill Harrell on guitar, were tracked down in 1998. In a miracle of modern technology, a more complete back-up band was overdubbed. That rhythm section included Don's sons Dale on mandolin, Don Wayne on upright bass, and Ronnie on rhythm guitar. In 1999, *The Golden Guitar Of Don Reno* (King CD-5115) was released as the first and only recorded example of Don Reno's flatpicking wizardry.

Ronnie Reno, the eldest of Don's three sons, is no stranger to playing rhythm alongside the greats in both bluegrass and country music and is proud to have had such an important role in bringing *Golden Guitar* to fruition. Growing up in a musical household, Ronnie first performed with the legendary Reno and Smiley during broadcasts of the Old Dominion Barn Dance. "Little Ronnie Reno" would stand on a chair and sing a number or two. Ronnie's first instrument was mandolin and he wound up playing full time with Reno and Smiley beginning in 1959 at age 12.

"Dad bought me a 1923 F-5 Lloyd Loar in 1960," boasts Ronnie proudly. "I started recording and touring with them. Luckily, it came easy to me. I never thought of any career other than music."

Reno and Smiley received lots of airplay on country radio and played regularly to sold-out crowds. Although very young, Ronnie's musical talents quickly earned him the respect of the many celebrities he met through his dad. Ronnie explains how many of his opportunities came about: "Reno and Smiley had a TV show in Roanoke. All the stars would play the show when they came through. I might go off and play bass with Ira and Charlie Louvin, but I felt secure with Reno and Smiley."

Always ready when called upon, Ronnie first performed with his dad on guitar

when Red Smiley stopped touring due to declining health about 1967. Performing as Don Reno and the Tennessee Cutups, Ronnie played guitar and sang in the days before Don teamed with Bill Harrell.

Regarding to his early guitar influences, Ronnie says, "I learned the most from watching Dad. Red was a straight-ahead bluegrass player, but Dad was unique and put some of the lead work into the rhythm, especially when changing chords."

Ronnie became the first person to play electric bass with Bobby and Sonny Osborne in 1968. He later moved to guitar and vocals after Dale Sledd left the group. Tthrough the Osborne Brothers Ronnie connected with one of country music's top stars—Merle Haggard.

"We were opening for a lot of Merle's shows and I used to sing and play with him backstage. I eventually left Bobby and Sonny to start my own band, but then Merle called, which was an offer just too good to turn down."

It is Ronnie Reno's acoustic guitar that is heard on one of Haggard's most well-known pieces, "If We Make It Through December." Reno worked with Merle from 1972 to 1981, touring 100 days-a-year and playing stadium-sized concerts. Even so, Ronnie was still doing other things during the off dates, such as heading the Ronnie Reno Band or filling in with his dad's group.

Ronnie explains how his stint with Haggard helped broaden his horizons as a rhythm player: "My role was as the acoustic rhythm player and tenor singer. Merle later hired Eldon Shamblin as the electric rhythm player and he shared his knowledge of western swing rhythm with me - playing a different chord for every beat. I also played with Red Lane, a great guitarist/songwriter here in Nashville. I learned different chords and different ways to get get to them from him."

With Merle's blessing, Ronnie continued to pursue his solo career and put out a couple of sides for MCA records. He later recorded several singles for Step One Records in Nashville, having some chart success with an up-tempo version of the Boxtop's tune, "The Letter."

Ronnie still had his country band going when his father passed away in 1984. Don Reno's passing prompted the idea of reuniting musically with his brothers who had been touring with their dad. "I asked Dale and Don Wayne to come to Nashville from Lynchburg in late 1985," recalls Ronnie. "We formed the Reno Brothers. We started as a mainstream country band with Don Wayne playing a Tele and Dale a Strat. We opened a lot of shows and played some casinos in Nevada."

In the early 1990s, the Reno Brothers decided to go back to playing acoustic music. "We were already doing some festivals where we'd change to acoustic instruments. We released Kentucky Gold in '92 on the Webco label, which went to number two in the Bluegrass Unlimited charts. It was very satisfying that the bluegrass community accepted what we were doing and the way we were doing it."

The Reno Brothers, with Ronnie on guitar, Don Wayne on banjo and Dale on mandolin, eventually signed with Pinecastle Records and put out several CDs for the label. During the later half of the nineties, the brothers were regularly headlining many of the country's top bluegrass festivals.

As with so many bluegrass bands, the Reno Brother's sound was anchored by a great rhythm guitar player - Ronnie Reno. Anyone fortunate enough to have seen the group knows that any rhythm player playing with Don Wayne and Dale has his work cut out for him when it comes to playing fast-tempo songs.

Ronnie shares how he kept his bluegrass chops up during his years as a country guitarist: "I still played bluegrass gigs with Dad when I wasn't on the road. Luckily, I had a wrist as limber as a dish rag. Dad would take great joy to see how fast I could play, especially if I hadn't played bluegrass in a while."

So what's the difference between a bluegrass and country rhythm guitarist? "Bluegrass is more on top of the beat and country rhythm is more in the middle of the beat—they let the drum get on top. I use more of an upstroke in the country rhythm and a thinner pick."

The two styles of rhythm, country and bluegrass, have become somewhat intertwined in Ronnie's playing. With such a fusion, it was easy for the Reno Brothers to play western swing tunes and make them sound bluegrass. This is yet another skill that Ronnie attributes to Father Reno. "Dad also had that knack of going from bluegrass to country. I heard his attack on Hank Williams, Bob Wills and Ernest Tubb tunes. He could play all those as easily on an acoustic as electric. I heard all this and took to it very naturally."

A good rhythm guitarist, according to Ronnie, "... views a note like an apple—you can take a bite out of the top, middle, or bottom of it. A beat goes by quick, but it's big. The trick is to react to where you can play on any part of it to get the rhythm or attack just right for a particular song."

Reno also feels it is important to build the band's sound around the lead singer/guitarist. "It starts there and you build the rhythm around that. You can play on top of the beat or in the middle. If the banjo and mandolin are on top of the beat then the guitar needs to be in the middle to keep the correct tempo and avoid speeding."

Ronnie Reno with his father Don Reno

Ronnie Reno performing with the Osborne Brothers

There are a couple of licks that are identifiably part of Reno's playing. The first being the famous run that accentuates the end of each vocal phrase in the Reno & Smiley classic, "I Know You're Married." At first listen, it sounds like the standard Flatt-G run. What makes the lick different is that the song is in the key of D, so the notes of the run are moved over to begin on the open low E string and all are struck as downstrokes. Ronnie describes what he considers to be his own signature lick: "I have a backward approach to a lick. To move from a seventh chord to the next chord, I hit the seventh note first and then the fifth."

Ronnie Reno has had some nice guitars to work with during his career, beginning with a 1936 00-18 Martin that his grandfather gave his dad when Don Reno was nine years old. Ronnie had just had the guitar worked on when his dad called in 1972 to inquire about its whereabouts for the session he was planning at King Records. That is the guitar heard on *The Golden Guitar Of Don Reno*.

Another collectors' piece inherited from his dad was nearly lost according to Ronnie: "I was using Dad's 1941 herringbone. At IBMA one year, I left it overnight in a restaurant in Owensboro and was afraid it had been lost or stolen. When I got it back, I figured it was time to get my own guitar so I could give that one to Dale. Dad got me an old Lloyd Loar and Don Wayne got his banjo, so this way Dale could wind up with one of Dad's fine vintage instruments."

The guitar he got after the near loss of the '41 herringbone, was an even more vintage model. "It's a 1934 herringbone. There were only 52 made that year. It was the first year Martin made the herringbone—one of twelve fourteen-fret Martins that Wurlitzer ordered. It even has the sticker in it."

In addition to being a guitarist, Reno has worn many hats in the music business. He once was a partner in Rocky Top Music, Sonny and Bobby Osborne's publishing firm. He writes songs and had a #1 country hit when Conway Twitty recorded his "Boogiegrass Band." He served as a booking agent and a television producer while hosting his creation, *Reno's Old-time Music Festival* from 1993 to 1995. From 1994 - 2000, Ronnie found time to give back to the music that has given him so much by way of holding the Artist and Composers seat on the Board of Directors for the International Bluegrass Music Association.

Reno is once again involved with television production bringing music programming to the Americana Television Network. While 2001 was the last season for the Reno Brothers to perform as a touring band, Ronnie is keeping the Reno sound alive with his new group, Ronnie Reno & The Reno Tradition. The band's line-up includes Mike Scott on banjo, Heath Van Winkle on bass, Jackie Miller on fiddle, and Danny Roberts (who builds mandolins for Gibson), on mandolin. Of course, the group's sound will be anchored by the master of rhythm guitar himself—Ronnie Reno.

Flatpicking Guitar Magazine *editor Dan Miller conducted the following interview with Ronnie in March of 2002:*

Can you tell me a little bit about your dad's background with the guitar?

Sure. Actually Dad started out playing the guitar, really, before he started playing the banjo. He started work with Arthur Smith when he was 14 years old. Of course, Arthur "Guitar Boogie" Smith is one of the great musicians of our time. Arthur was a school musician. He taught Dad the right ways to sight read music and he taught Dad theory—tons of theory. That is why Dad had such a great left hand. I think a lot of that came from Arthur Smith.

Dad had a great love for the guitar and he could play any part on it because Arthur, Dad, and Tommy Faile would play three guitars together. Actually, they recorded "Guitar Boogie" and called it "3D Boogie" because they played three different guitar parts on it. I've got the old 78 record at home.

Arthur shared his theory with Dad and Dad carried that over to the bluegrass field when he came to Nashville to play banjo with Bill Monroe in 1948. When he came to Nashville he met Hank "Sugarfoot" Garland and he and Hank used to get together in the Tulane Hotel and play for hours and hours. Dad was great at playing the harmony part. He could play harmony to about anything he could hear. So he and Hank Garland used to play harmony guitars a lot together. Dad had just as good a feel for country guitar as he did for fiddle tunes or bluegrass guitar. He could play either one.

Did you pick up any music theory from your dad?

I first played mandolin with Dad and Red Smiley and I picked up some of his theory on the mandolin. I actually got more theory later on in my travels. I started playing guitar with the Osborne Brothers when I left Dad and of course Bob and Sonny don't like a lot of runs. They didn't want guitar runs, they wanted a nice, even, full guitar. And so I didn't apply many runs there. As I left Bob and Sonny and went with Merle Haggard I started learning a lot more theory. Merle had greats playing with him like Eldon Shamblin and Red Lane and they would share their theory with

Ronnie Reno with Merle Haggard

me. And Roy Nichols was my roomate. Roy and I would sit around for hours and play guitars together. I was playing the acoustic guitar and Roy was playing Tele. He wanted somebody to play with, and so did Merle. We played on the bus constantly. We kept the guitars going all the time.

When you started learning how to play music was it all by ear?

It definitely was. Dad was a great teacher. He could play anything on the mandolin that Bill Monroe could play. He studied those people. He could play anything on the fiddle that Benny Martin could play. He could play those old hoedowns—"Katy Hill" was his favorite. He could play it on the fiddle just like Benny played it, or he could apply it to the guitar, or he could play it on the banjo, or the mandolin. He could play any of them. So I was fortunate that I had him.

When you were first starting to learn how to play, did he encourage you to learn it by ear?

He didn't encourage me at all! But I knew that if I was going to go with him that I was going to have to get good! [laughs]

Was that your inspiration to learn how to play? Because you wanted to go on the road with your dad?

Yes, I sure did. He put me on stage at a young age in 1955, but I was so young I was just singing. They didn't have a mandolin player so I first started chopping rhythm with them. That went on to lead playing and then from there it went into a full time job with Reno and Smiley.

I was inspired. Bill Monroe used to come by the house and visit and eat breakfast all the time. Ira Louvin would come by. . . everybody stopped through Roanoke, Virginia, because they were going on up to the DC area, or going on up the valley. They always stopped by Roanoke because we had the TV show and, of course, Dad wouldn't have it any other way then they come eat breakfast with us after the show. I was fortunate to be around it.

In having the opportunity to see and meet all of these people in those days, were any of them particularly influential in your playing?

I would say Vassar Clements. I used to love the way that Vassar played the fiddle. And, of course, the guitar just came to me because I had heard it so much. Red was a powerful run player on the guitar and he got such a tone out of the guitar, as we all know. I just took it for granted at that time. I thought everyone had that kind of tone. But they didn't and in later years I realized what he was doing.

When you picked up the guitar were you after that same kind of tone that Red got?

Actually, I moved up the neck a little more than Red did. I tried Dad's tone. Dad had that sweet tone on a guitar that I liked. I would hunt around until I found that spot on the guitar.

When you started playing with your dad were there specific tips and pointers that he would give to you or where you left on your own to listen and learn and figure it out yourself?

I was figuring it out on my own, but I also watched him and if the timing was out of sync with his heart, his right foot would start stomping in order to get that feel back. He couldn't help himself.

So if you, or another member of the band, would start to get off time, your dad would stomp his foot to get you to come back? Is that how you learned to have good timing?

Oh yes. When that foot started stomping, something was going to give. You got with the foot for sure! [laughs]

You start playing guitar with your dad when Red got ill?

Yes. When we left Roanoke Red didn't want to travel anymore. He couldn't travel because his sugar was so bad. I started playing guitar with Dad then. We came to Nashville and recorded an album with

Ronnie Reno with his brothers Don Wayne and Dale

Ronnie Reno and the Reno Tradition

Monument Records. I think it is one of the best albums Dad ever recorded. Benny Martin played fiddle with us and Junior Huskey played bass. I played guitar with Dad until he went back to Washington to team up with Bill Harrell. I went back to mandolin then.

What kind of guitar playing did your dad like behind his banjo?

He liked runs because he was able to stay away from the runs and at the end of his rides he would accompany the runs. He knew how to make them work with what he was wanting to do with the vocals and with the runs he was doing at the end of his solos.

Were you playing any lead guitar when you were with him?

No. It was strictly rhythm. Dad was doing all the lead work on the banjo.

Had you started messing around with any lead playing on the guitar by that time?

No. I really didn't get into lead guitar until I got with Merle Haggard. I knew it was there because Dad did it. When I started it, it came to me with no problems. It was just there. I had heard and seen my dad do it for so long.

You played lead on the mandolin and you saw your dad play lead guitar. You didn't have any interest in learning how to play lead on the guitar?

Not until later years. When I came back after I left Merle I really had an appreciation of what kind of musician Dad was on the guitar because I had been with some of the greatest guitarists in the world. When you are working with Eldon Shamblin, Roy Nichols, and Red Lane, then you can tell the difference. Dad could definitely play with any of them. He was that caliber of a player.

When you first started learning how to play leads you were just picking out what you were hearing?

What I was hearing and what I was feeling—exactly. It just popped out.

You went from playing a run-based style of rhythm guitar with your dad to playing with the Osborne Brothers, which is quite different. How did you make that adjustment?

I adjusted through the singing. I let the singing lead me into it. I was doing a third harmony part with Bob and Sonny and I played with my singing. Sonny was doing all the runs on the banjo so he didn't need a stout guitarist.

Is that something you knew about the guitar role with them or is it something you felt when you started playing with them?

I sort of felt it and Sonny told me that he wanted a nice straight rhythm. He didn't tell me why, he just told me that that is what they wanted. It fit the kind of music they were doing.

When you went with Merle Haggard, that was a transition in rhythm styles again. How did you make that transition?

A country guitar player flows with the rhythm section. I would just feel where the runs were needed and they would just happen.

But the timing is different.

The timing is different. You don't play on top of the beat in country. You are sort of laid back and of course a lot of times I would play a fingerpicking rhythm. Not a Chet Atkins or Merle Travis type, but like a piano. The rhythm on the piano would be the same kind of rhythm Merle would want on the guitar. Instead of a strum, it would be a fingerpicking rhythm. When you do that you are really able to accent the leads into the next chord. You hear it all the time on country records. It is hard to explain, but when you are in the middle of it and you've got a great band around you, you can understand it.

It must have been wonderful to play with Eldon Shamblin and learn about what he did on the guitar. Did you learn a lot from playing with him?

I did. I learned Eldin's accenting. He showed me a lot of his passing chords. His knowledge of chord structure was tremendous.

Eldon, Roy Nichols, and Merle were all playing guitars. What was your role in that band? How did you fit in?

I was the only acoustic player and so I had more freedom then they did because they were trying to stay out of each other's way. My job was to add flavor and fullness to the band with big round and ringing notes. Their job was to add excitement and punch.

I know you played with your brothers for many years. Are you still doing that at all?

No, last year was our last season together. We had been together for 16 seasons. They are pursuing some other avenues in music other than straight bluegrass and I am happy right where I'm at. I decided to stay in the traditional side and they are out playing rock grass and doing well with it.

Is your new band, the Reno Tradition, going to do much touring?

Yes, we are going to be out at about 40 festivals this summer.

On our audio CD for this issue Ronnie Reno and Brad Davis play and sing "Freight Train Boogie." Brad has transcribed Ronnie's kick-off and lead break through to first variaton of the first solo and we have presented it on the following page.

Freight Train Boogie

Arranged by Ronnie Reno
Transcribed by Brad Davis

Marquis of Huntley

by Craig Vance

Here is a great little two-chord wonder in the mysterious key of Am. I picked this one up from Norman Blake's fine recording *Lighthouse on the Shore* (Rounder 0211). Norman's version of this piece is played in Cm, but I dropped it down to Am for ease of fingering on the guitar.

On that recording, the melody is primarily played out on the mandola (Norman) and viola (James Bryan), giving it the medieval feel.

The tune captured my attention immediately and I learned it on the mandolin, but until now, had never transferred it over to the guitar.

The second part of the tune requires a little bit of tricky maneuvering for the left hand. In the first measure of the second part, use the Dm shape on the 8th fret. By doing this, you minimize the movement of the hand. The second measure, use the D chord on the 7th fret for the same reason.

The "wrap up" line in the 7th measure of the second section had me sitting on a fence as to how I was going to lay it out most efficiently. I started out by keeping the block form of the Dm on the 8th fret, but by the time it descended to its final destination, I was left in the up the neck position and it would have taken far more energy to finish it that way. So I used the option of moving down the neck for ease of completion.

This is a great tune that is certainly not overplayed. Learn it now, and amaze your friends!

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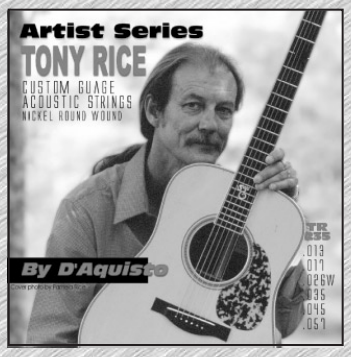
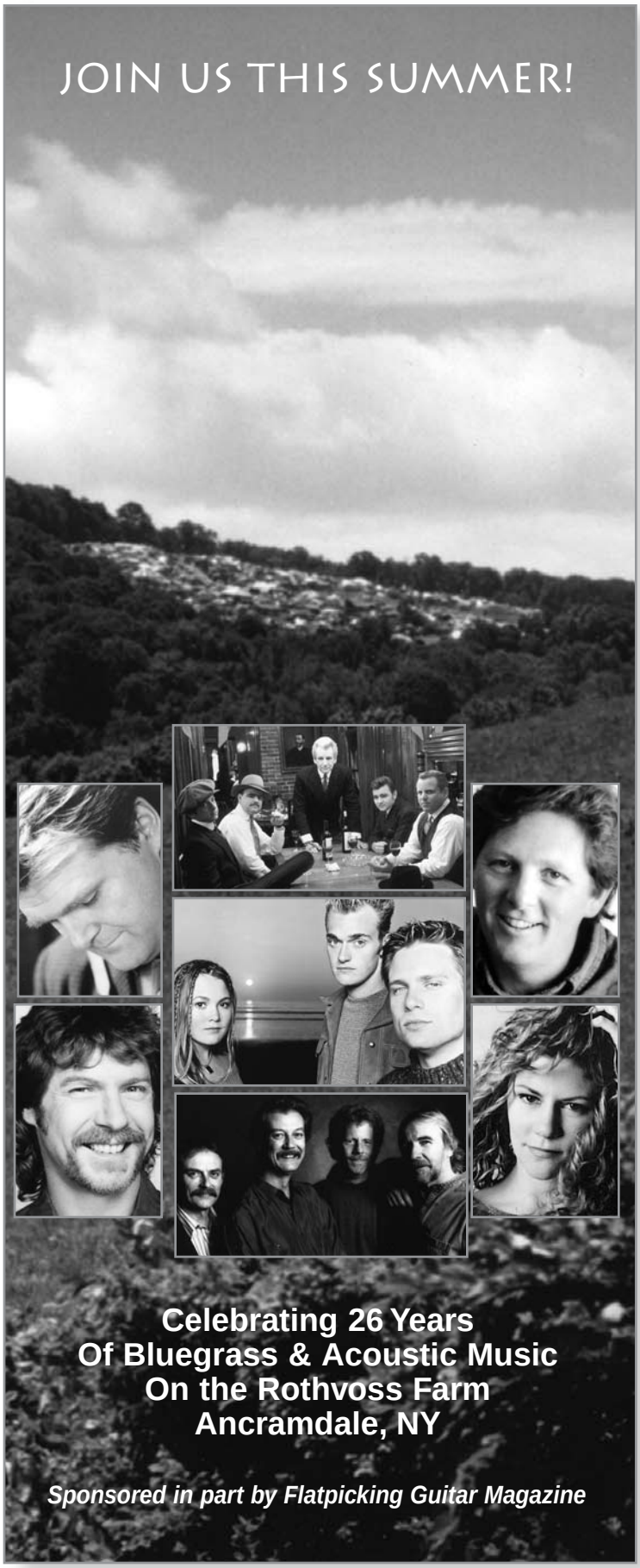


Marquis of Huntley

Arranged by Craig Vance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Beginner's Page

by Dan Huckabee

Sharpening Your Musical Ear

Could you sing "Will the Circle be Unbroken" using the musical scale numbers instead of the words? If not, you really don't know where you are in the song at any given point. Let's sing the words first so I can show you what I mean:

"Will the cir-cle be unbro-ken by and by Lord by and by there's a better home a wait-ing in the sky Lord in the-e sky."

If I were to sing it with scale numbers, we,d sing:

5 6 1 1 3 2 1 3 3 2 1 2 1 6 5 5 6 1 1
3 5 5 3 1 2 3 3 2 3 2 1.

Sound stupid? Believe me, this will make you powerful! Very powerful! Did you know that the first word in the song (will) was the 5th note of the scale? If the answer is no, then you don't know music as well as you thought you did. I know you know the "do, re, mi" scale because I've taught it to you in past columns, you've learned it from your guitar teacher and from the movie "The Sound of Music." Do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do. Or 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

"Will" is 5. "The" is 6. "Cir" is 1. "cle" is 1. That's the first phrase. So what is the second phrase? "Be" is 3. "Un" is 2. "Brok" is 1. "en" is 3. "Will the circle be unbroken" is: 5, 6, 1, 1, 3 2 1 3. Wish I could sing this to you in the magazine but you know the song so put the magazine down and sing it one time now.

What would the notes be on your guitar? Open 4th string, 2nd fret 4th string, open 3rd string, open 2nd string, 2nd fret 3rd string, open 3rd string, then open 2nd string.

Now let's analyze that first string of numbers (5 6 1 1). We started on the 5 of the scale and started walking up the scale to 6, then we skipped a note (7) and went up to 1 (which is the same as 8). Then the second phrase was: "be unbroken" — 3 2 1 3. What was that all about? We descended down the musical scale 3, 2, 1 and then back up to 3 again. We were just walking down stairs then leaping back up the stairs, skipping the 2nd step. So when A.P. Carter wrote this song, he was just playing around with the musical scale, running up a while, down a while, and skipping a step every now and then, when he felt like it. Sort of like Tom Hanks dancing all over that floor piano in the movie *Big*.

So where did "Will the Circle be Unbroken" wind up at the end? Right! It went: 3, 2, 1. It ended on 1. If you sing "Will the Circle be Unbroken" in scale numbers, you'll know exactly where you are in the song at any point you choose. This means that you are never "musically" lost. You might have a great voice and be able to sing in tune real good, but do you know which note you're singing? If not, you might be in the same situation with your guitar playing as well.

I have an easy and fun solution to rid you of this problem. I'll sing you two more songs with the words, and then with the numbers, then suggest a few more songs for you to try on your own. How about Mountain Dew?

"Oh they call it that good old mountain dew a-and them that re-fuse it are fe-ew. I'll hush up my mug if you'll fill up my jug with that good old moun-ta-in dew."

6 6 5 5 6 1 1 2 1 3 3 2 1 1 6 1 1 1 6 5 5 5 5
6 1 1 1 3 3 2 1 1 1 3 3 2 3 2 3 2 1

Isn't it scary how similar "Mountain Dew" is to "Will the Circle be Unbroken?" About 75% or more! And we might have never realized it, if we hadn't analyzed them with scale numbers.

How about: "Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms"

"Roll in my sweet baby's arms. Roll in my sweet baby's arms Lay round the shack till the mail train comes back and I roll in my sweet ba-by's arms."

3 3 3 3 1 6 1 3 3 3 3 1 1 2 1 1 1 3
3 3 4 4 1 6 6 6 5 7 1 2 3 2 1.

Wow, did you notice the last four notes of all three songs were identical! So as far as the last 4 notes are concerned, they are all the same song! This may seem like a beginner exercise, but I betcha even some of the pros couldn't do this.

Now I'd like for you to try: "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," "Salty Dog Blues," "Blue Moon of Kentucky," "Home Sweet Home," "I Saw the Light," "Amazing Grace," "Way Downtown," "Swing Low Sweet Chariot," and "Long Journey Home." Feel free to choose your favorite songs instead if you like. The more you do, the easier it will become. By the time you've done a dozen or so, your ear will start to develop. You'll literally know where you are musically in every song you encounter, and this will help every facet of your life as a guitarist, singer, and musician.

This exercise is one of the many chapters from our 2-hour video called: *Understanding The Formula Of Music Makes It So Easy*. It's the background that every flatpicker needs, and its as easy as watching TV. Give us at Musicians-Workshop.com 800-543-6125. So if you wanna be a great flatpicker, all you gotta do is train your fingers and your ear.

Flatpick Rhythm Guitar

by Joe Carr

Django Reinhardt Revisited: "Nuages" (Clouds)

Previously, in the Django Reinhardt issue, this column contained a transcription of "Tea for Two." In addition to being a great solo piece, this arrangement has lots of cool chords that you should know and therefore it made sense to include it in this rhythm guitar column. It also got me thinking about an old out-of-print book on Django in my collection.

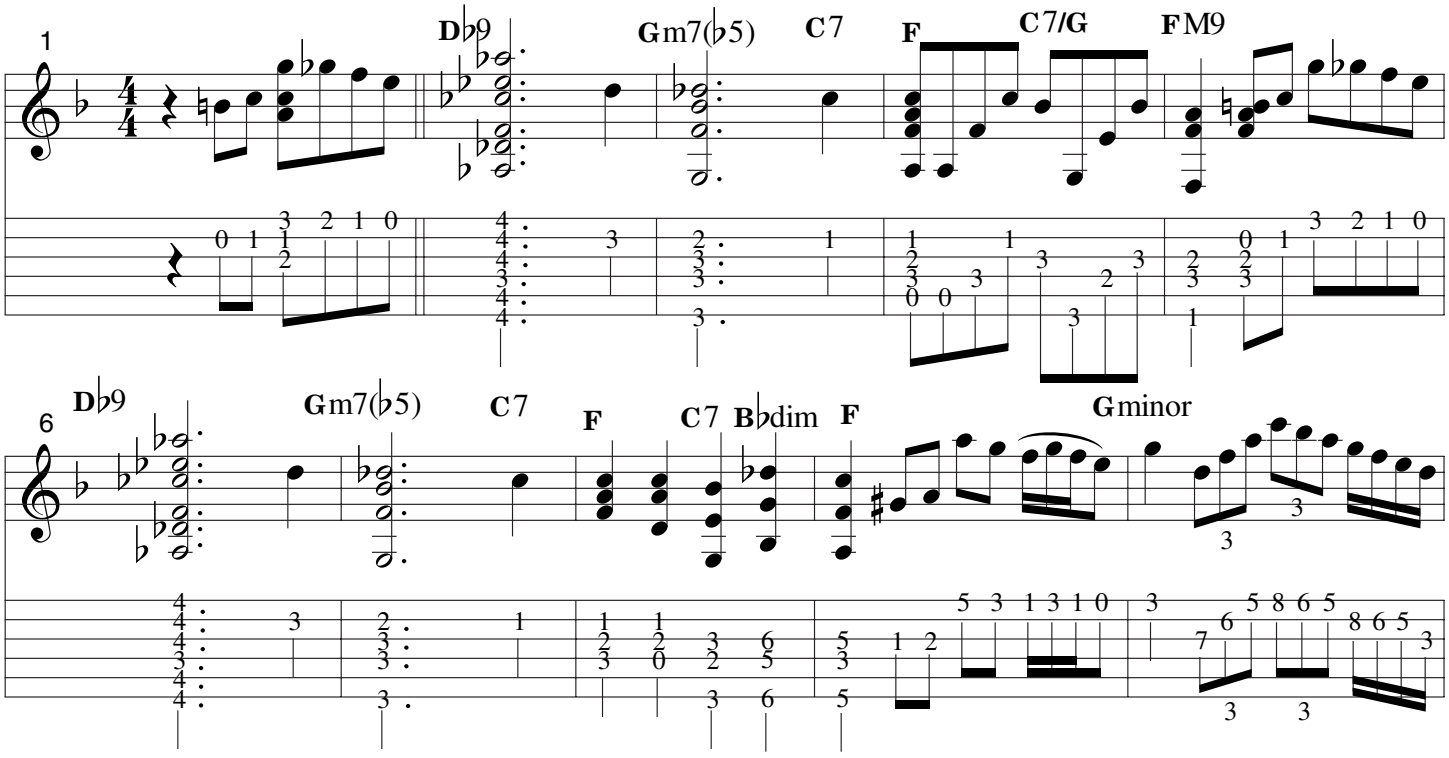
Django Reinhardt was written by Stan Ayeroff and published by Consolidated Music Publishers in 1978 as volume 83 of their *Music for Millions* series. It is a very thorough study of Django's playing that includes 15 transcribed solos and a careful analysis of his unique style. The music appears in standard notation only, however, which likely limited the book's appeal.

"Nuages" (Clouds) (pronounced Noo-Ahhj) is an original composition by Reinhardt presented here in three versions. Recorded in 1950, "Nuages for solo guitar" is a beautiful and haunting arrangement. Ayeroff indicates in his notes that this recording was originally to be part of a soundtrack for a movie about Django.

For this article, I have abridged and slightly re-arranged Ayeroff's transcription. The chord symbols are mine and are intended for analysis, not accompaniment. The tempo can be very slow if you like.

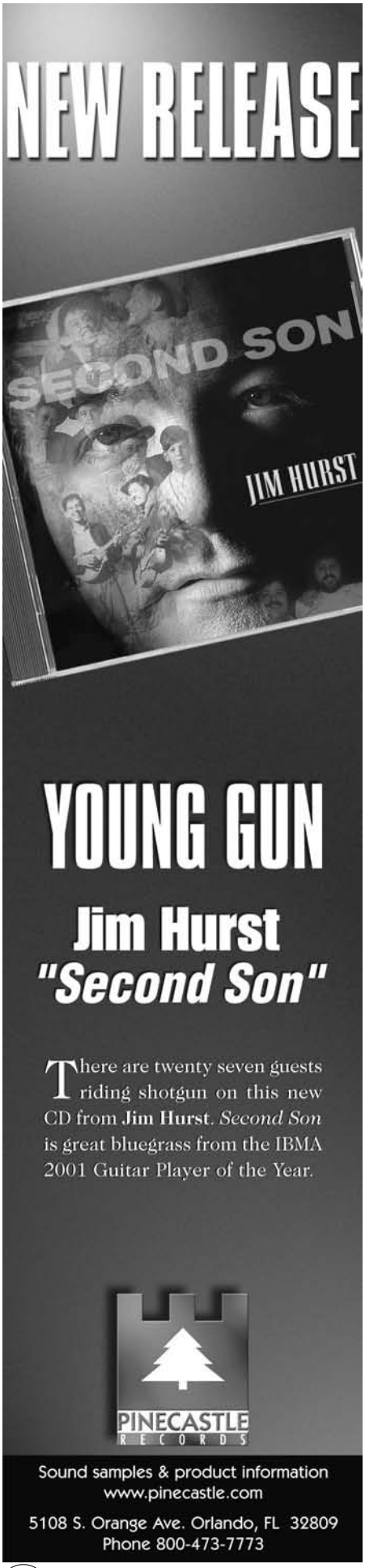
Nuages

Arranged by Joe Carr



Nuages (con't)

11
A7
Dminor
G7
G♭/D♭
G7/D
16
C
B♭9
Cdim
D♭9
C7
D♭9
Gm7(♭5)
C7
F
C9
21
F
D♭m6
Cdim
B♭/D
F7/C
B♭Maj7
26
B♭minor
E♭9
F
C7
F6
D♭9
31
Gm7(♭5)
C7
Adim
F6
Adim
E♭9
G♭9
FMaj7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The Watson Feeling

by Steve Kilby

"Hello" fellow guitar pickers, my name is Steve Kilby and I'm very pleased that *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* has invited me to share some of my flatpicking techniques with you.

I would like to introduce you to a technique I use which changes the timing of my guitar licks to sound more like Doc Watson. I'm talking about the licks after the lines of a song such as "Gonna Lay Down My Old Guitar."

Our five licks here are in the key of C and the first is the pretty basic C chord lick that many guitar players do. It involves six eighth notes ending with a quarter note and follows the timing that almost everyone expects. Doc Watson's inner timing, however, feels different. For example, our second lick is almost the same except that we leave out one eighth note, (fifth string second fret B), and make the one just before it, (fourth string open D), a quarter note. Thus we are holding that note longer, creating a different timing and beginning to sound a little more like Doc. We are still ending at the same place with this lick as the previous one, just using a quarter note instead of two eighth notes.

When we move on to the third C chord lick we come to our ending note early, or this is how it will feel. We make the fourth string open note (D) a sixteenth note and follow it by a dotted eighth note on fifth string third fret (C), thus leaving the feel of a gap before we start our rhythm again. This is where we begin to get the Doc Watson feel of a song when he changes the timing of a few licks. Doc does this naturally, but the rest of us have to think about it.

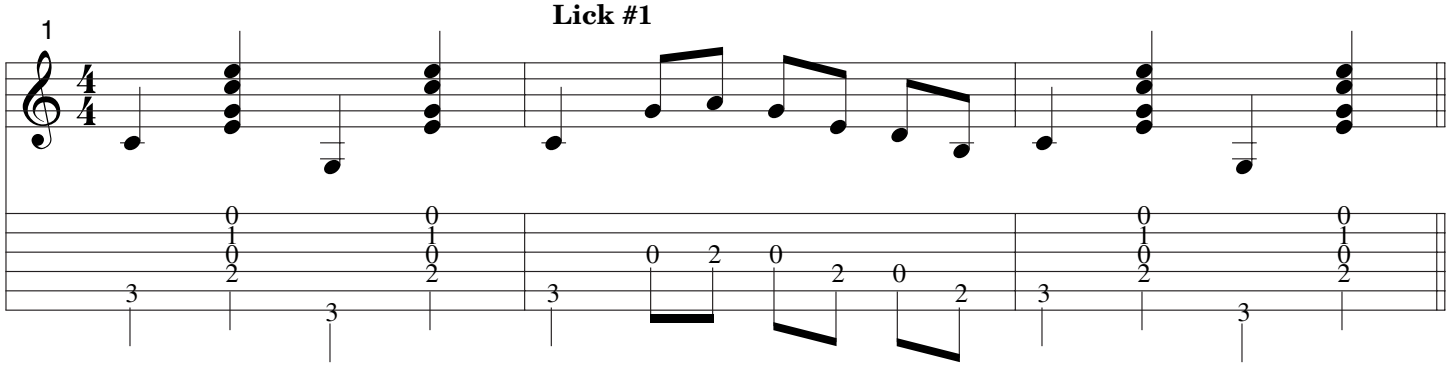
Our last two licks are also in the C chord. As before, the first is a pretty standard Carter-style lick featuring four eighth notes leading up to a middle C as a quarter note. Doc seemed to change this to the second lick (lick #5) which leaves out one eighth note, (third string open G), and goes straight to the middle C note. As with the third lick, the second-to-last note in the phrase is a sixteenth note and the last note (C) is a dotted eighth note. Thus we have that feeling of getting to the last note early so we have a pause afterwards, before resuming the rhythm.

Steve Kilby

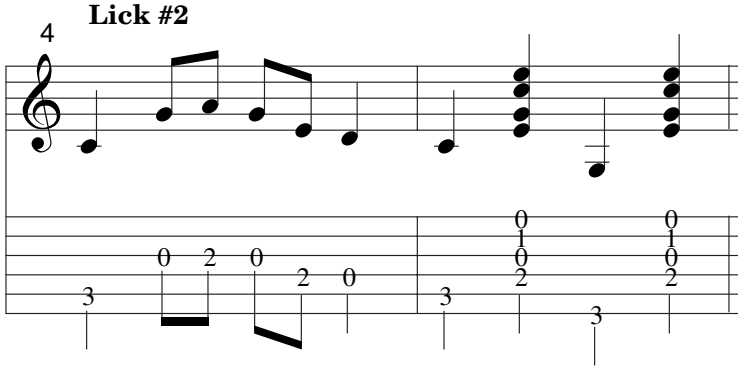
As you experiment with this technique of leaving a note out and going to the ending note early, you will find that this works with many licks in many keys. You will then find yourself playing in the Doc style that I call "The Watson Feeling." Feel free to visit my website www.alleghanymusic.com and let me know if these techniques discussed here are helping you.

Steve Kilby is a guitar teacher and performer from Piney Creek, NC. Steve has been a popular instructor at the Roanoke Bluegrass Weekend for the past few years and was featured in Volume 4, Numer 6 of Flatpicking Guitar Magazine.

Lick #1

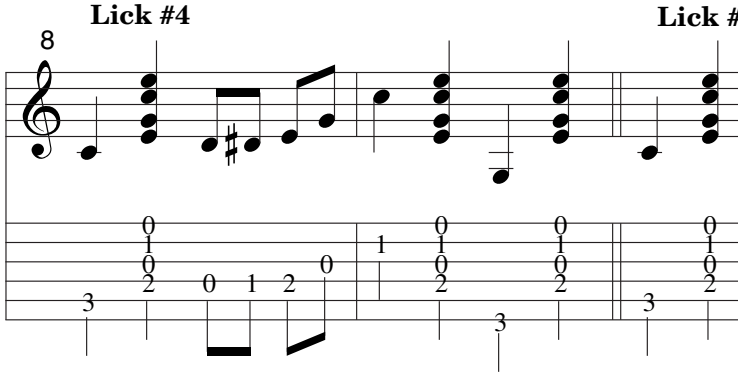


Lick #2

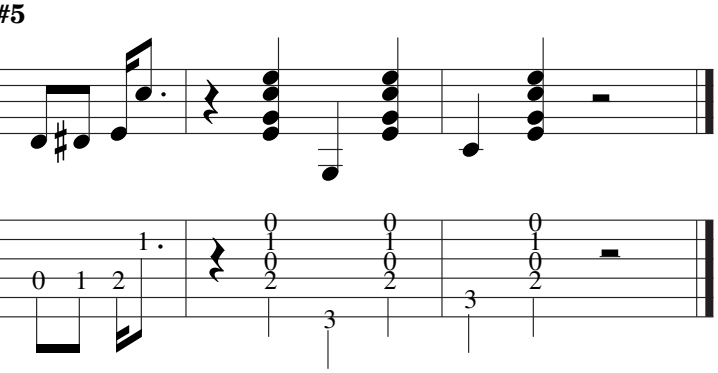


Lick #3

Lick #4



Lick #5



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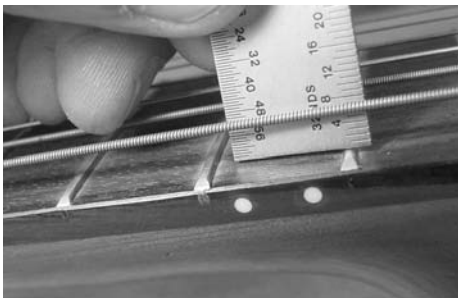
Guitar Maintenance and Repair

by Frank Ford

A modest setup for a modest guitar:
Lowering the Bridge
(Hey, they're not all 1937 'bones!)

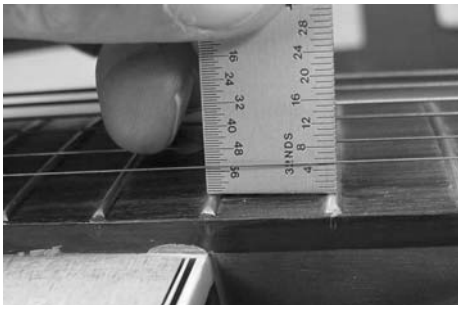
Take this 25-year-old Yamaha FG-331. It has a lot of life left in it, although the action has climbed to a stratospheric level with the advancing years. The relentless pull of six steel strings caused the same effect you'd be likely see in a Martin guitar of the same vintage. If you read my *Flatpicking Guitar* piece on neck angle diagnosis, you know exactly what I'm talking about here. If not you might take a trip to FRETS.COM (www.frets.com) and dig into the Big Index Page for the article on evaluating neck angle.

For now, check the action at the 12th fret:

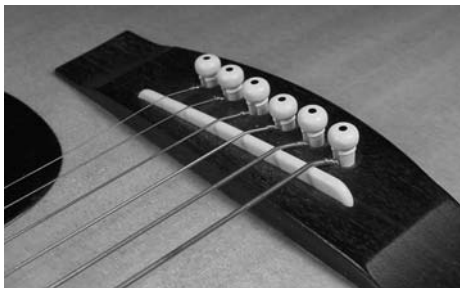


I'd like to see it set at 3/32" clearance between the bottom of the string and the top of the 12th fret. It's actually about 5/32" on the bass side.

Here's the treble:



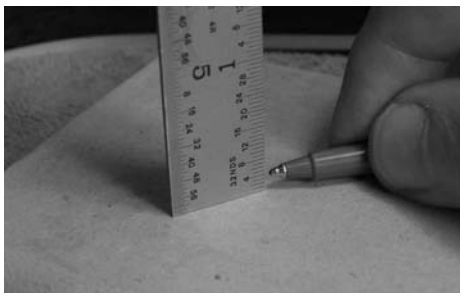
Same deal here: we'd like 2/32" and we have twice that. (OOPS, I took the photo with the ruler at the thirteenth! No matter, it's about the same action there as at the 12th.) Let's see what's going on down at the bridge:



It looks pretty normal, with a bit of saddle protruding. In fact, it looks pretty much as it did when the guitar was new. Chances are this instrument has spent a lot of time sitting around. After all, nobody could be playing it with action that high. By the way, I checked the truss rod and action at the nut, and those were set at their ideal positions.

Suffice it to say that this guitar really needs to have its neck reset for the best playability, but cost is a serious issue. The owner of this guitar could buy a pair of nice new guitars for what the job would cost if done in the "best" traditional manner: by taking the neck out, recutting the joint, leveling and refretting the fingerboard, and the attendant setup work.

Thinking back to my high school geometry class, I remembered that if I want to lower the action 2/32" at the midpoint of the strings (12th fret) then I'd have to go down a full 4/32" (1/8") at the saddle. So, I set my precision marking gauge to exactly 1/8." OK, so it's just a ruler and a ballpoint pen, and "exactly" works out to "approximately," but you get the idea.



With the pen held steady at that level, I can strike an even line across the bottom of the saddle:

I now have a nice line to work to, and I can clamp the saddle in the flat jaws of my vise, with the line just level with the top of the jaws. A few strokes with a big nasty double cut file, and I can remove the undesirable extra material below my line:

This process leaves the bottom of the saddle a bit ragged, so to straighten it up a bit, I rub the bottom across some 150 grit sandpaper clipped to my old marble cheese cutting board:

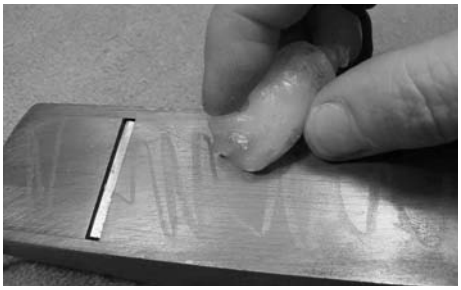
Now the saddle is flat enough on the bottom to seat well in the slot—even flat enough for good contact with an under-saddle pickup element, although there's there's no pickup in this guitar now.

Sticking the saddle back in the bridge, I can see exactly what I have to do next:

The saddle is completely submerged below the top of the rosewood bridge. Now, I have to cut a corresponding amount off the bridge itself to allow the strings to pass over the saddle at an appropriate angle without interference.

A layer of wide low-tack masking tape will protect the top from being scuffed by stray bits of sandpaper or whatever.

I'll be using my old Stanley #60-1/2 low angle block plane to cut material off the top of the bridge, so I have it sharpened and adjusted for a light cut. Here, I'm striking a few marks with an old candle to lubricate the sole of the plane as I work on the bridge:



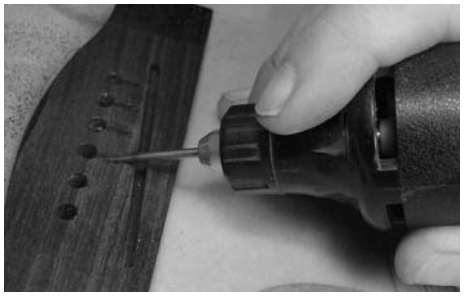
It may seem inconsequential, but that small amount of paraffin lubrication makes all the difference in ease and control of working with a plane.

I make a pretty good size pile of shavings as I whittle the bridge down to size:

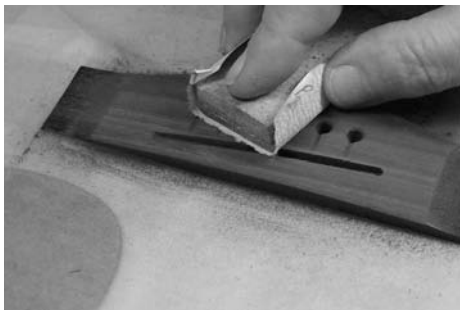
Being careful to watch for grain runout, and working at an angle, I can get clean shavings with little tearing of the wood fibers.

From time to time, I'll check the results by inserting the saddle, and seeing how much sticks up. Looks like this will do nicely. The saddle doesn't protrude as high as when the guitar was new, but it's enough to do the job:

In order to have the strings cross over the bridge with enough downward pressure ("break angle") to get good contact, I'll use my old Dremel tool and a cylindrical burr to make little ramps for the strings:



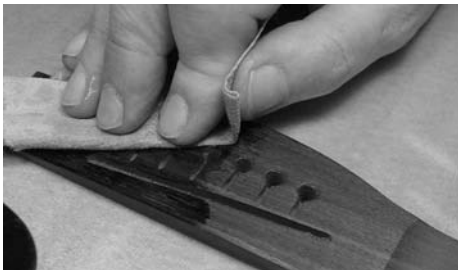
Time for a bit of cleanup work. I'll sand the freshly cut portion of the bridge top to level out any plane marks, and to round it over just a bit to simulate the shape it had originally:



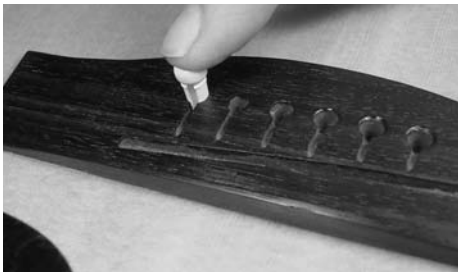
And, to make the job look uniform, I'll block sand the bridge tips with the same grits of sandpaper:

Some #0000 steel wool does a nice job polishing rosewood to an appropriate sheen:

And, a bit of mineral oil makes the wood look rich again:



Sure enough, all that work left the bridge pins standing proud by about 1/8" so I'll need to adjust them:



A couple of turns with my bridge pin reamer, and the pins will seat nicely:

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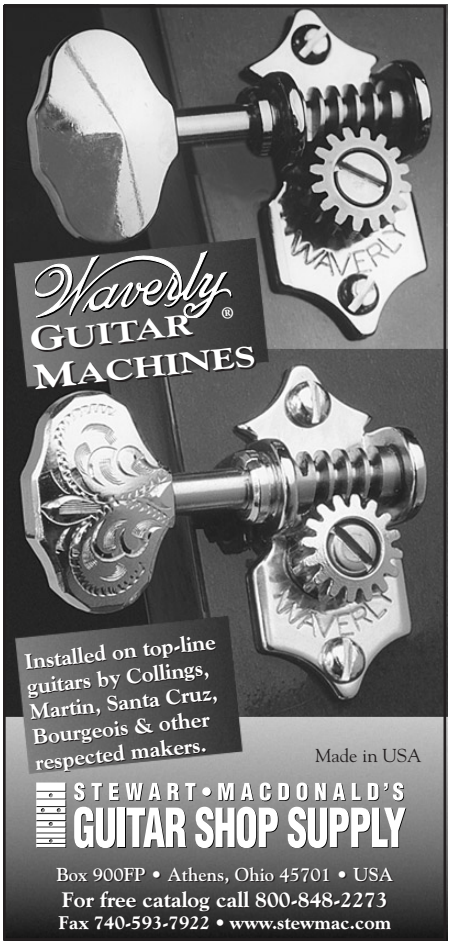
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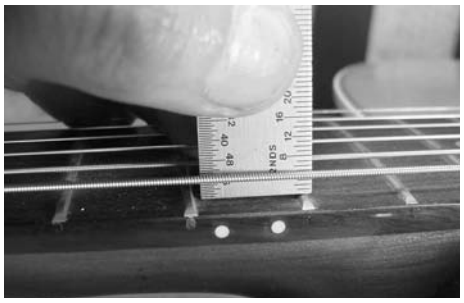
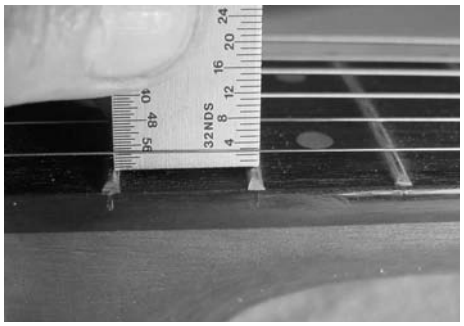
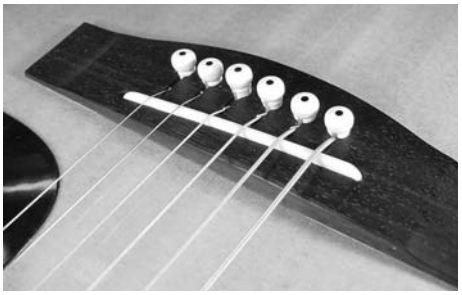
OK, time to restring and take a look:



Now, that's more like it, just about 3/32" action on the bass side, and 2/32" on the treble:

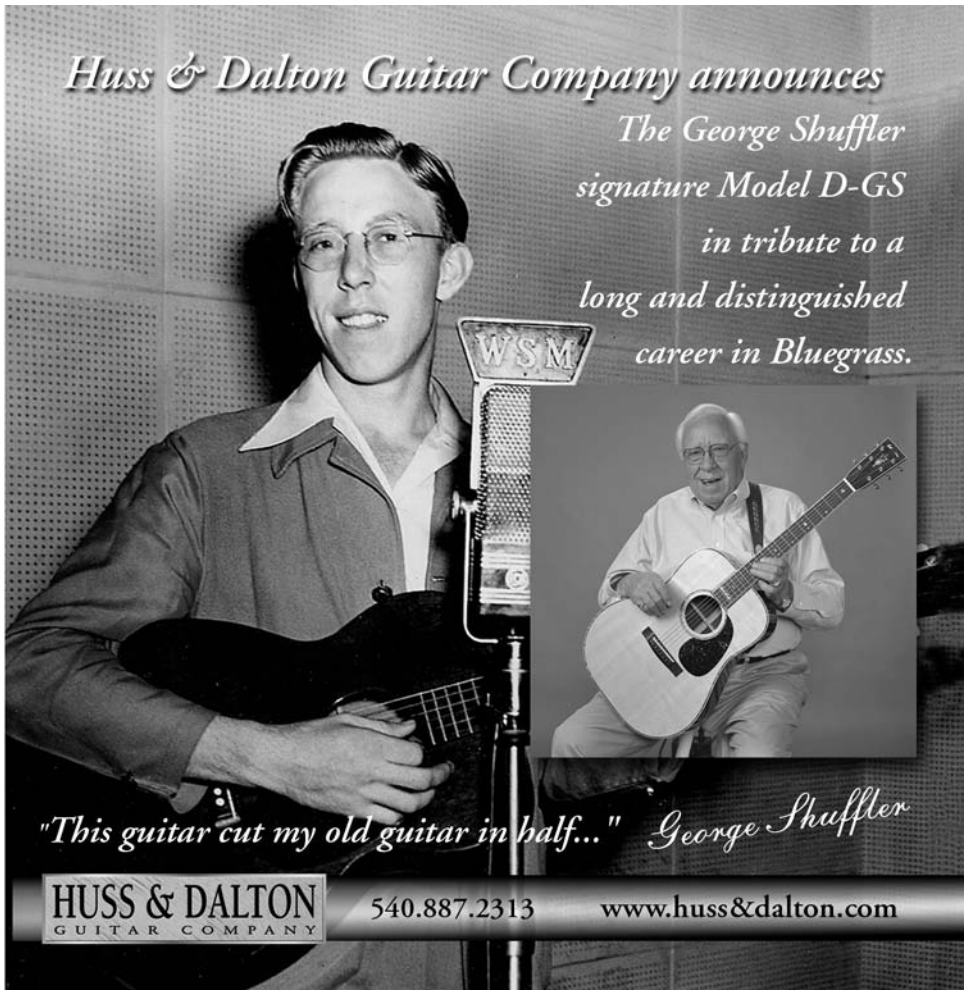


After all is said and done, most folks wouldn't notice the low bridge, even though it is only about 2/3 its original height. The saddle, bridge pins, and string ramps look pretty normal:



And now, Mom's old guitar is back in shape for the next generation to get started playing music!

These days a large bit of my work is on expensive "professional quality" instruments, but I still find this one of the most rewarding kinds of repair. After all, the goal is to make more guitar players. . .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Kaufman's Corner

by Steve Kaufman

Colored Aristocracy

I first learned this tune when I was around 19. I was at the National Flatpicking Championships and heard a young kid from Brooklyn—Orrin Star—play this tune and win the Nationals that year. This is a killer tune that should not give you much trouble. The only places to watch are in the hammer on eighth notes. In most cases you will hit two ups in a row. The arrows are there to help you through this so watch out.

I am reminded of this tune because it is one that I played with Mark Johnson at last year's Kamp Koncert series. The tune made it to the new *Best of the Kamp Koncerts 2001* Double CD set. Be looking for it or check my site at www.flatpik.com for CD info.

Have fun with this great tune and let me know how it treats you.

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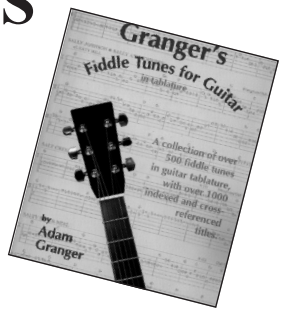
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Additionally, Wyatt is shown improvisationally accompanying various instruments (banjo, fiddle, guitar, mandolin) and then analyzing what he has done to provide the rhythmic foundation behind each instrument. Also featured are guest appearances by: Rickie Simpkins on fiddle (Sally Goodin' and Dusty Miller) and mandolin (Big Country and I Wonder Where You Are Tonight), Sammy Shelor on banjo (Ground Speed and Whitewater), Kenny Smith on guitar (Goodbye, Liza Jane and Bill Cheathum) and Tony Rice (Waltz for Indira, Manzanita, and Devlin). Wyatt provides guitar accompaniment to each of these artists and then analyzes the techniques he has employed.

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Adventures in Acoustic Music:
Django 202

by John Carlini

Let's continue our discussion of the music of Django Reinhardt by looking at a few ideas for solo playing over chord changes. Since we were working with "Minor Swing" in the previous column, we'll stay with that one.

I think the most important element in Django's music (or in any music) is the feeling. That emotional element in the music is called by many names; groove, swing, soul, high-lonesome, and so on. Without it you really don't have music. ("It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing!") It cannot be taught. A good teacher can recognize the potential, draw attention to it, challenge the student and use all kinds of "trickery" to get it to assert itself. Ultimately, it must take charge. The notes become an expression of the "swing" (in this case).

The best thing you can do is to listen. Put on a Django recording. Get in a comfortable space. Close your eyes. Listen. Get into it. The Quintet of the Hot Club of France is a perfect example of what I'm talking about here because they "swung"! Relentlessly! Continually! There was never a let up in the feeling, the groove. They were amazing! You can learn a lot from that. If you have a recording of "Minor Swing," start there. After a while try to play along and try to emulate that feeling.

As an aside I just want to mention that David Grisman arranged a version of "Minor Swing" some years ago which he recorded with the incomparable Stephane Grappelli. It's a great version and one with which you may be more familiar. It is however a longer form. The reason I am using the older version is simply because it is an easier form for purposes of this column. But definitely check it out and experiment with David's composition as well.

A basic solo element which Django used is the arpeggio. So, for openers it would be good to get the following 3 arpeggios together:

Example 1: A minor
Example 2: D minor
Example 3: E Major

As you practice these arpeggios try to "see" the chord shapes on the fingerboard. Move as smoothly as possible from one note to the next as you "roll" your left hand fingers across the fingerboard. These notes are your "source material" for soloing.

As I've said before, arpeggios are not music; they are technique builders. So in playing a solo, especially in swing and related music forms, you must apply what we discussed earlier, the swing itself, the groove, the soul, etc. Pretty scary stuff! Flirting with the unknown! Actually tapping into it to come up with spontaneous originality! But, hey, that's what it's all about! It doesn't have to be complex or "notey." Miles Davis, an improvisational genius, had the ability to play one note and get a full house on their feet cheering! How? Timing. Drama. Meaning. Art. The right note with the right inflection at the right time. Well...we all have to start somewhere. You can do it in bluegrass music, rock, swing, or classical. Style doesn't matter. What matters is meaning the notes that you play.

Here are a few techniques you can practice using these arpeggios. Try playing each note in sequence, preceded by its lower chromatic neighbor. For instance in A minor, instead of simply A-C-E, play G#-A, B-C, D#-E. Run all the arpeggios that way. It should lead you to some interesting places. You may hear a few things that you like and will remember to try in a solo sometime when you're in a jam session. Try them out using the rhythm tracks I recorded in the last issue of *Flatpicking Guitar*.

I know I haven't been talking much about Django, but Django *is* what this is all about! It's his spirit, his essence, that we have to listen to for inspiration.

Here's a little Gypsy-esque sound you can try. Play the root the chord preceded by its lower chromatic neighbor, and followed by its upper chromatic neighbor, and finally back to the root. In other words, G#, A, Bb, A. You can use the same technique with the fifth of the chord. (E in the case of A minor). That would be D#, E, F, E. Mix the notes up any which way. Again, try it with those rhythm tracks. You should hear some pretty Django-like sounds spilling off that fingerboard. Don't be afraid to go "where the spirit takes you"!

Have fun! Salute a Django!

For performance and teaching information, lots of new acoustic music, and musical news items of interest, please visit John Carlini's web site, www.johncarlini.com. To join John's email list, email him at jlc@johncarlini.com. His teaching videos can be ordered by calling 800 543-6125 or visiting www.musicians-workshop.com.

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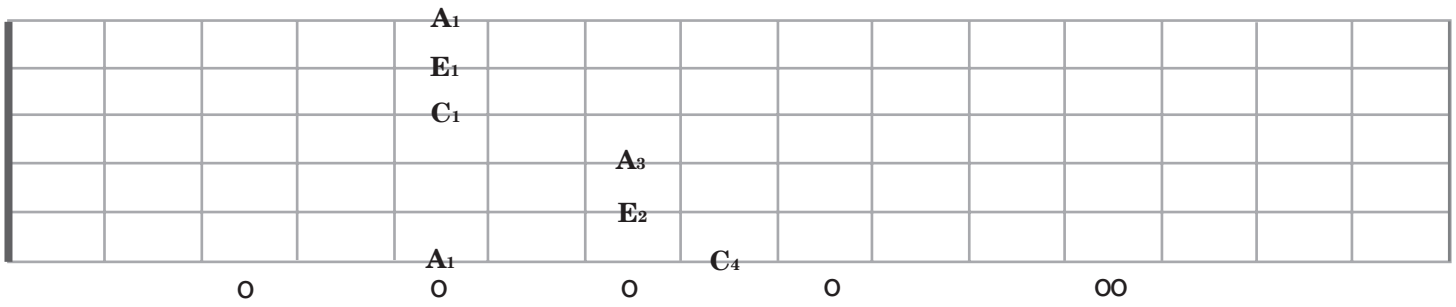
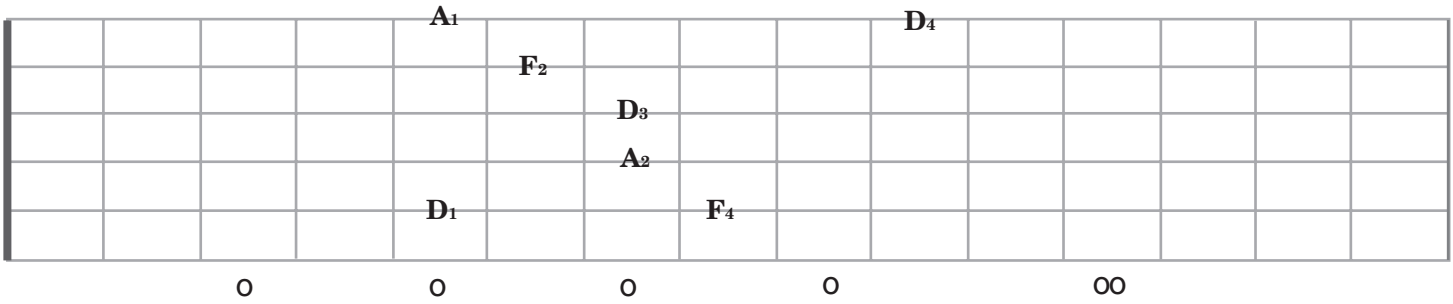
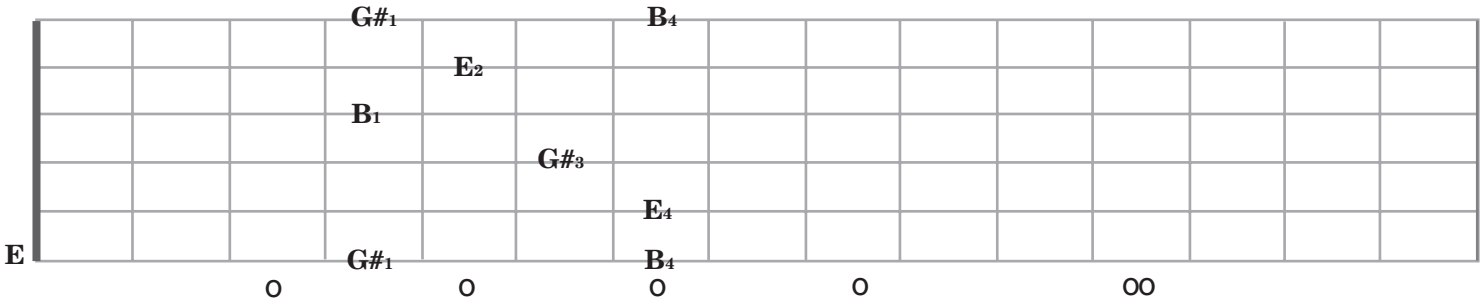
Example 1: A Minor

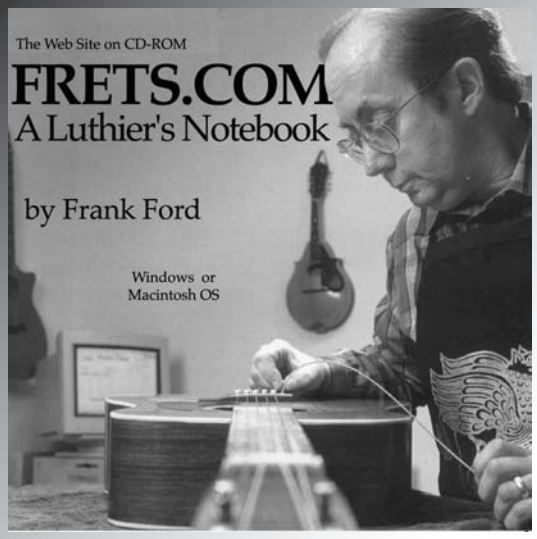


Example 2: D Minor



Example 3: E Major





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Flatpick Profile:
Mike Dowling:
Down From The Mountain

by David McCarty

For years, Mike Dowling had a career in Nashville nearly any acoustic musician would have envied. Today, he's traded it for a life almost any person would envy.

In his ten years in Nashville, Mike worked with some of Music City's top acoustic and bluegrass musicians. He wrote songs for the likes of Emmylou Harris, Tim O'Brien, the Nashville Bluegrass Band, Kathy Mattea, Del McCoury and Claire Lynch. Four of his songs are listed on *Bluegrass Unlimited* magazine's list of the top 200 bluegrass songs of the past decade. His stylish, swingy flatpicking on both archtop and flattop guitars, coupled with his roots-intensified fingerstyle playing on acoustic and resophonic guitars, made him one of the most versatile guitarists on the Nashville music scene.

Most acoustic musicians work their entire lifetime and never come close to that kind of success. But in 1996, Mike and his wife Jan chucked the whole "Nash Vegas" scene and moved just an 8th note run or two away from the Wind River Mountains of western Wyoming. The nearest towns—Crowheart and Fort Washakie—aren't much more than wide spots in the road and he's more likely to hear coyotes than the wail of police sirens.

As his interviewer, I wanted to grab him, shake him by the shoulders and demand an explanation for how he could callously toss away such a precious and rare place among America's acoustic music elite. Instead, being the civil, courteous sort of journalist that I am, I let him explain things in his own words, and I ended up understanding completely that he got the best end of this transaction, by far.

"The good parts of Nashville were the terrific musicians, the music get-togethers and the musical camaraderie. I really enjoyed that," he reports. "I played with my own band and I played some with Vassar and with Buddy Spicher and the Nashville Swing Band, but I did a fair amount of writing while we were there, too. Both Jan and I knew when we moved there that we weren't going to stay forever. And the more I started traveling and performing as a solo, the more apparent it became that it wasn't critical for me to be based anywhere in particular as long as I had access to an airport."

In 1995, with the release of *Swamp Dog Blues*, Mike launched a solo performance career and unburdened by the need to be part of Nashville's music scene, Mike and his wife decided they could live wherever they wanted to live. "We both love wilderness and the mountains. We actually met in Alaska, and I felt I could stay focused on my music and still travel enough to feel connected to things at the same time". A love of the outdoors, especially fly fishing for finicky Rocky Mountain trout, led him to explore the beautiful Yellowstone region and they settled on the small mountain town of Dubois, Wyoming.

"I think some of our friends in Nashville were shocked when we told them what we were going to do, but it's worked out well. Now they all want to visit." Dubois is a town of 1,000 residents with another 500 or so scattered throughout the surrounding valley. Mike's home overlooks the Wind River. Cottonwoods and giant sagebrush decorate the landscape.

Mike's business, as well as his record label, is called Wind River Guitar and under that umbrella the Dowlings open their home to guitar students who come to stay with them for a week at a time in a total immersion approach to guitar instruction. "We limit that to about 10 weeks a year, at the most, so we don't get burned out," Mike explains. Tuition at Wind River Guitar is

$1,200, but the price goes down if you come with a buddy, and it includes room, board and all the instruction you can handle. If you want to sneak in a little fly fishing while you're there, well, Mike probably wouldn't mind that, either.

When he's not teaching at home, Mike is on staff at some of the nation's top guitar and acoustic music camps, including the International Guitar Seminars and the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins, West Virginia. "I probably teach as much as I perform these days", he says. "I really enjoy it." Last year he launched his own Greater Yellowstone Music Camp and drew 50 guitar, fiddle and bass players interested in studying acoustic blues and swing to little Dubois. This year's dates for Mike's Greater Yellowstone camp are June 24-28. Visit www.mikedowling.com for further information.

If you can't attend a camp or a workshop where he's teaching, or make the long trek to Wyoming for one-on-one, you might want to check out his Homespun video instruction tapes, including two of special interest to *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* readers. *Swing Guitar—Rhythm's Where It's At* offers aspiring swingers a densely packed instructional course in the use of sophisticated jazz chords and movable voicings, jump-blues rhythms and other aspects of the art of swing rhythm guitar. His follow-up volume, *Swing Guitar—Improvising Hot Lead Solos*, helps demystify the often complex world of swing soloing for the flatpicking guitarist inexperienced in jazz riffs and hot swing licks. He also has a companion CD of backup rhythm tracks available from Homespun, *Swing Guitar Practice Sessions*, designed to help students work at their own pace on the material presented in the swing videos.

Mike's love of the music goes back to his youth in central Wisconsin, where he listened to his folks' Les Paul and Chet Atkins records. He played in blues and bluegrass bands during college and backed up artists like swing fiddle legend Vassar Clements when they came to play in Wisconsin. The association with Clements led to Mike's being hired in l975 to play in Vassar's first touring band.

Mike explored flatpicking guitar the way most of us do, by listening to Doc Watson or Sam McGee, but he also loved swing and that took him in another direction. His only formal instruction in a lifetime of playing guitar revolved around one seminal figure, the masterful George Barnes. "George was really the only person I studied with along the way and I feel very fortunate to even have known him. We spent a lot of time playing guitar duets," Dowling recalls. Barnes played jazz guitar with a flatpick and like any good student Mike taped those precious sessions and can still refer to them more than two decades later. "I was interested in an all-around approach to the guitar and George Barnes was the man in my mind who had the kind of command of the instrument I was looking for. I was living in California at the time and I just called him up one day and he took me on. He was a great plectrum player and it was a great experience to know him and to play with him," he says simply of his time studying with the jazz legend.

As a guitarist who's played everything from fiddle tunes to straight jazz, Mike Dowling is aware of the technical traps and stylistic pockets that frequently hinder bluegrass-style flatpickers making their first efforts at moving beyond basic chord changes and traditional melodies.

"I would say the main hurdle is phrasing," he explains. "A large percentage of flatpickers develop a habit of playing in 8th note phrases, which work well for the rhythm and tempo of most bluegrass and fiddle tunes. In jazz and swing, however, in order to succeed you need to sort of detach yourself from that. It's hard to describe without a guitar in my hands, but you need to get away from feeling like you have to fill the solo with notes. You need to instead take a breath and think about your phrasing. It's a different way of approaching the music."

Dowling says Jethro Burns, the legendary swing and jazz mandolinist with whom he had the pleasure of performing and recording, was a master of subtle pauses, syncopations and unexpected intervals that he used to craft classic solos. "His solos seemed to breathe along with the melody instead of competing with it," adds Dowling. "I saw firsthand how Jethro could play a tune in a traditional style, but when it was time to improvise it was easy for him to switch gears and play with a nice bounce and a swingy sort of cadence. It was a real pleasure to work with him."

To achieve that sound, he adds, it helps to think more in terms of playing arpeggiated, rather than scalar, lines. Avoid constant diatonic licks that run up and down the scale in favor of more creative combinations of chord tones, chromatic passages and broad intervals. Mike's second swing video has a wealth of good examples and information on this topic.

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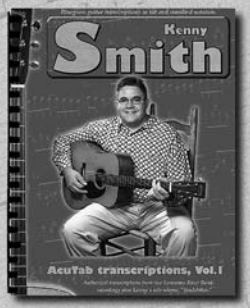

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Just listening to and absorbing the sound and musical feel of great swing musicians plays a key role in developing your own approach to playing this music, he stresses. In addition to such obvious choices as Jethro Burns and Django Reinhardt, Dowling recommends the music of Argentinean guitarist Oscar Aleman, his old teacher, George Barnes, and the duos of guitarist Eddie Lang and violinist Joe Venuti, and Eddie Lang and Lonnie Johnson.

"One of my all-time favorite albums is from the 1920s, Eddie Lang and Lonnie Johnson's Blue Guitars", Dowling says.

Dowling's newest CD is also an album of guitar duets. It's called *Two of A Kind* and he recorded it last fall with fingerstylist Pat Donohue. "I do quite a bit of flatpicking on it," he says, "as well as some fingerstyle and slide work." Different styles, different techniques. It's all good music when Mike Dowling plays it. As Donohue says in the liner notes, "I noticed when you play with Mike, almost everything works."

Mike may no longer occupy a place in Nashville's acoustic music scene, but that's more than okay with him. He's got a whole world of musical opportunities before him and all he has to do is come down from the mountain once in awhile. He likes knowing that he can always go back.

Mike Dowling Discography:
Beats Workin',
Wind River Guitar, WRG-01
Swamp Dog Blues, WRG-02
Life at the Café Carpe, WRG-03
String Crazy, WRG-04
Bottomlands,
Solid Air Records, SACD 2012
Two of a Kind,
Solid Air Records, SACD 2028

On this issue's audio companion CD we provide you will hear Mike Dowling performing his arrangement of Duke Ellington's classic tune "Caravan." This cut is taken from Mike's *String Crazy* CD. Mike provided us with the transcription of his solo and some technical pointers to go along with the tab.

Mike Dowling's notes on the performance of "Caravan":
Before you begin. . .

This is my interpretation of Duke Ellington's wonderful song "Caravan." In order to keep it rhythmic and interesting for solo guitar I've arranged it in a particular way. The best way I can describe the underlying rhythm is to call it a "Bo Diddleyish" kind of constant 8th note strum. Practice this rhythm with a loose wrist and experiment with pulling my accents (and your own, too).

You should think of your right hand as the metronome or your motor for this piece. You can maintain an up and down strum throughout most of the tune, but be careful not to let the rhythm overwhelm the melody. A good exercise might be to play only the "Caravan" theme, or melody, using a metronome to get a sense of just how much space there is between the melodic phrases. I've used "down" and "up" symbols in the tab to highlight the accent strums.

I'd also like you to consider having very little of the pick exposed in order for your hand to stay close to the strings. For right hand damping, use the pad of your thumb, the side of your thumb, and the end of your index finger along with the nail. This will add percussion and definition to the rhythm.

Another damping technique involves using your left hand. You'll notice a lot of notes that are indicated with an "x" in the tab. These are deadened notes and in order to achieve this, consider relaxing your chording hand. You might even wrap your left thumb around the neck to lightly touch the 6th string when you need to muffle it.

Bluegrassers should have no problem with these techniques. Some of the same notions about dynamics that flatpickers use, from digging in with the right hand to feathering or, as George Barnes used to say, "shading" the pick, are utilized in this piece.

This is a long piece of music as I recorded it, over four and a half minutes. I've notated the intro and the theme as I play them, but I've not attempted to tab my imrovised middle section. As for the end, I've kept that stark E7b5#11 chord you hear on the recording and I've paraphrased an ending.

I hope you have fun with this, Mike.

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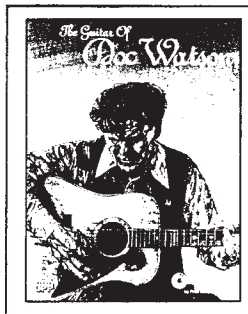

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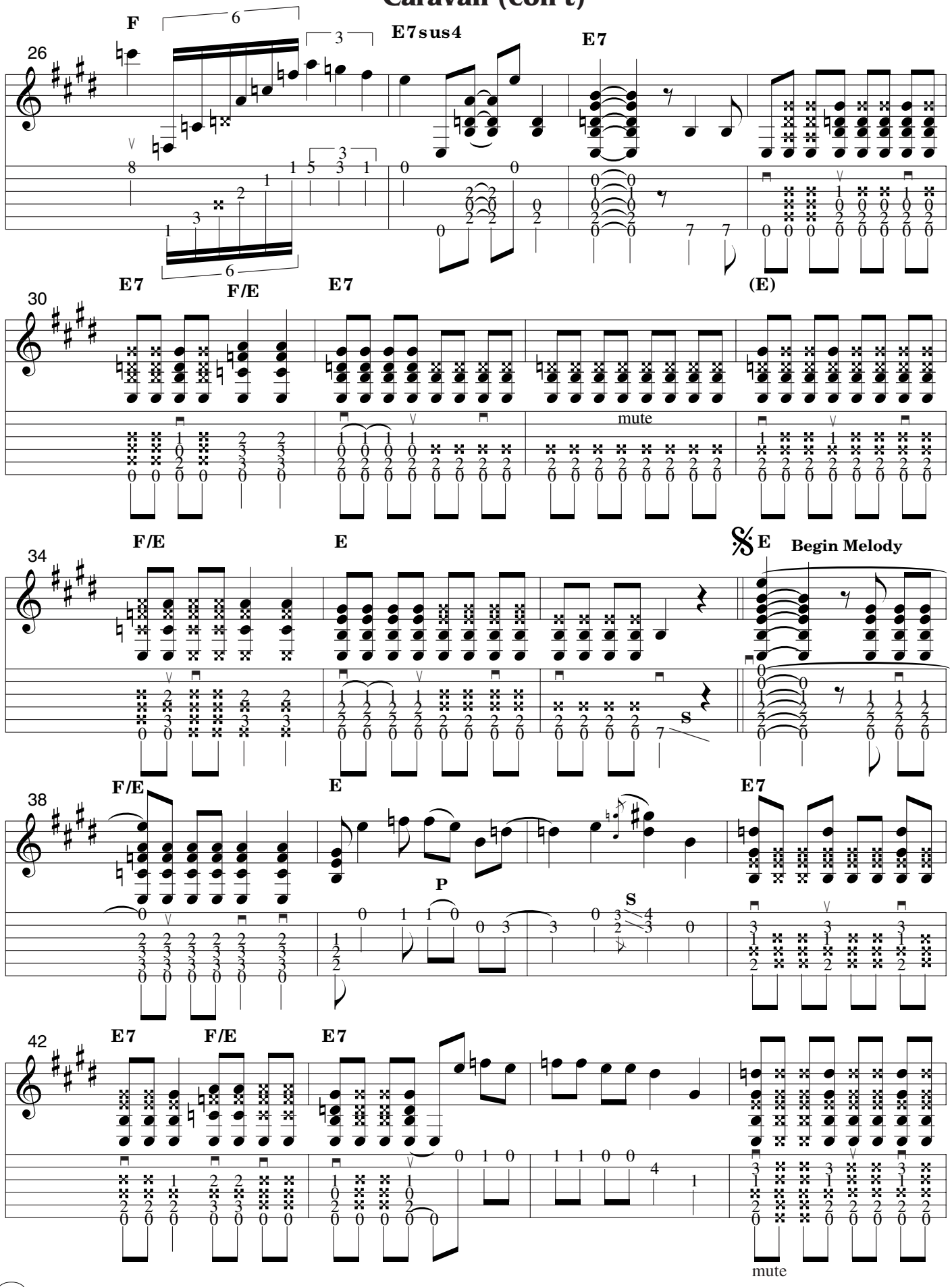
Caravan

E
Fmaj7
E
let ring
etc.
E
Fmaj7
E
F
E
let ring
E
F♭5
mute
let ring
3
F♭5
E
F♭5
E
F
E
F
= downstroke
= upstroke

Caravan (con't)



Caravan (con't)

Caravan (con't)

NASHVILLE FLATTOP

By Brad Davis

Reinventing Old Licks to Ignite New Enthusiasm

All pickers have their bag of favorite licks. Unfortunately, some players never work to expand their playing beyond those licks that they feel comfortable with and can rely on. I have always found that reinventing new and original licks, that are variations of the standard licks, can create a renewed enthusiasm in my playing.

During the past few years I have had the honor of touring with Earl Scruggs. I have noticed that the majority of the songs Earl plays are in the key of G. The songs we play, for the most part, are familiar songs that I have picked my whole life, so the material is very familiar to me. In order to generate a level of freshness with this material I started to reinvent some of my old G licks and use them carefully throughout the set.

In order to "re-invent" my licks, I simply took one of my old standards and started to mess with it. I started just picking the pattern and purposely grabbing notes that were "wrong." By going out on a limb like that, you can come up with some really interesting stuff. Below I've tabbed out some simple and crazy G licks that you might be able to use in some of your solos. Have fun with these licks and good luck! Check out my new web site at:www.white-h2o.com.

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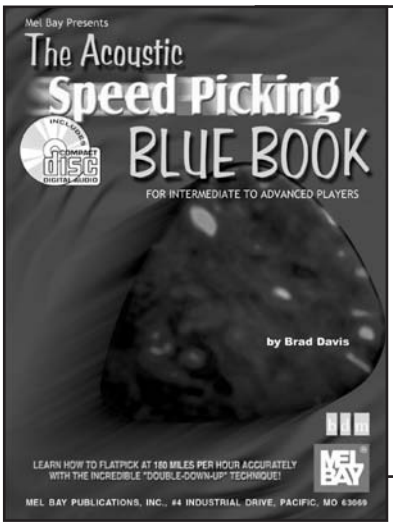
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G Lick #1
G Lick #2
G Lick #3
G Lick #4
G Lick #5
G Lick #6
G Lick #7
G Lick #8
G Lick #9
G Lick #10

Break Time

by Chris Jones

Break Intros Part 2

In my last column we discussed intros to breaks, and I gave 10 different examples, all in the key of G. I closed with a promise to follow up with examples from other keys, and I'm here today to make good on that promise. On the other hand, I believe it's your turn to buy lunch.

You will recall that I classified these intros by the melody note they lead into, and assigned them either a "1", "3" or "5" depending on where the note was in the scale of the key that we were in. The same principal will apply of course in other keys. In example #1, the intro is in the key of D and leads to an F sharp note. This is a "3" in the key of D (the "Me" of the "Do Re Me" in that key, and don't make me sing it!); therefore I'm calling this a "3" intro. Example #3 is a "1" intro, and example #4 is a "5".

In this new set of intros, I've concentrated on the keys of D and C and have included "1", "3" and "5" intros in both keys. As you play through them, you might try to classify them for yourself.

It only makes sense that a good clean start to a melody-oriented break should have the first main melody note as its jumping off place. You can play it straight or drift into improvisational never-never land from there, but you've at least established where the melody begins. In each of the 10 examples, this melody note comes at the beginning of the second measure.

If you have the January/February issue handy, consult page 36 (if you tell me that you ripped out the "Break Time" page to use for kindling, I'll be very upset), and you'll see that example #1 in G is melodically identical to this issue's example #1, except that the new one is in D. I did this, not out of laziness, but to demonstrate that a good intro in one key can sometimes be transposed into another, without costly surgery or the use of power tools. Similarly, example # 3 in the previous issue is very close to the melody of the new example #2, except that a double stop is used for the first note.

A handy intro device is to play out of the chord formation, making it easy to connect double stops with the help of hammer-ons and pull-offs. I've used this technique quite a bit in these D and C intros, particularly in examples #4, #6 and #10.

As with the G intros, I tended to use hammer-ons, slides and double-stops for the melody notes in measure 2, to help give them emphasis and punch. There were exceptions, though (examples #7 and #8), and you should bear in mind that these notes need to be hit with strength and clear tone.

Other intro notes: Example #5 would be considered a "high 1" intro (it's in the key of D and leads up to the higher D note) and would make a good beginning to an up-the-neck break. The melody note in the second measure of examples #4, #6, #9 and #10 is the lower of the 2 notes in the double stop with the higher note being used for harmony or coloring. Example # 8 is for you Clarence fans.

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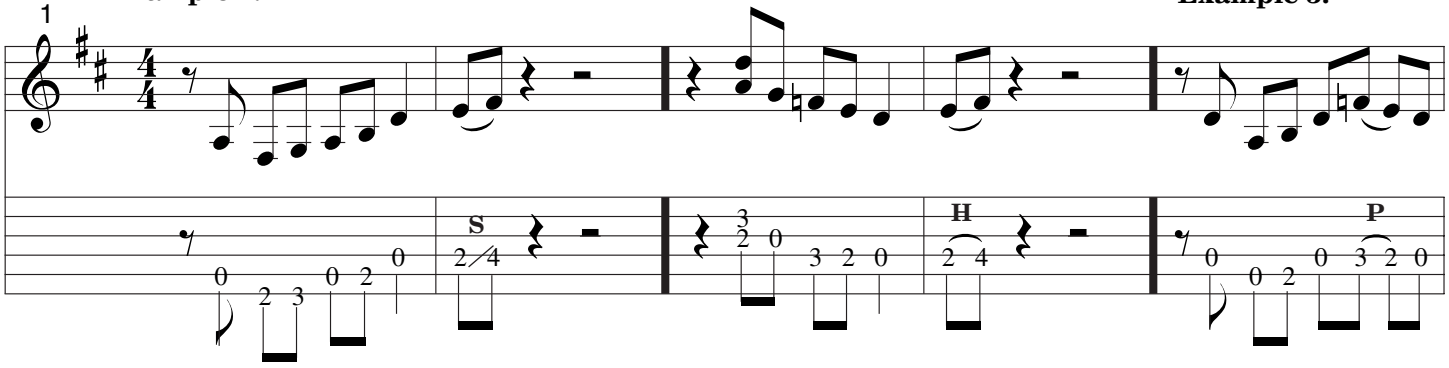
Example 1:

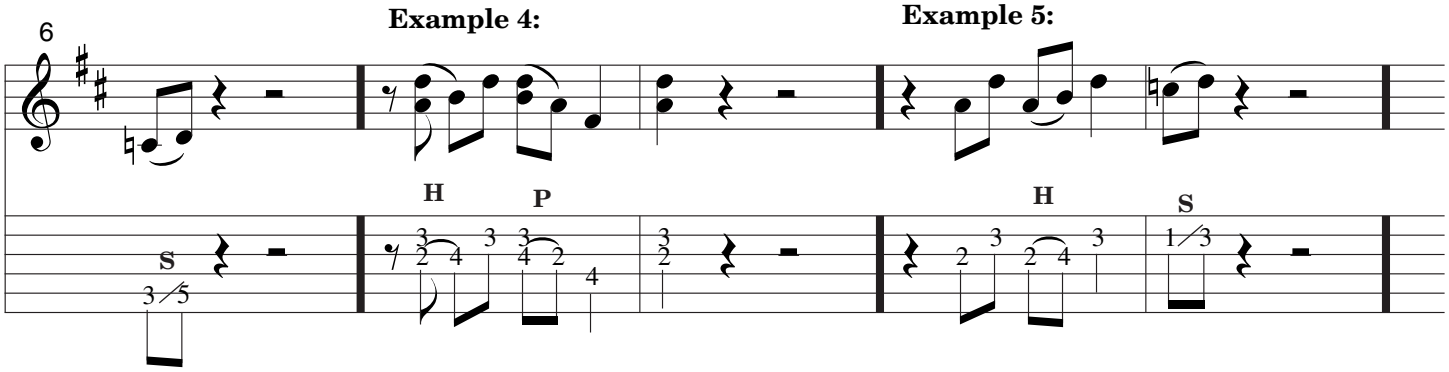
Example 2:

Example 3:



Example 4:

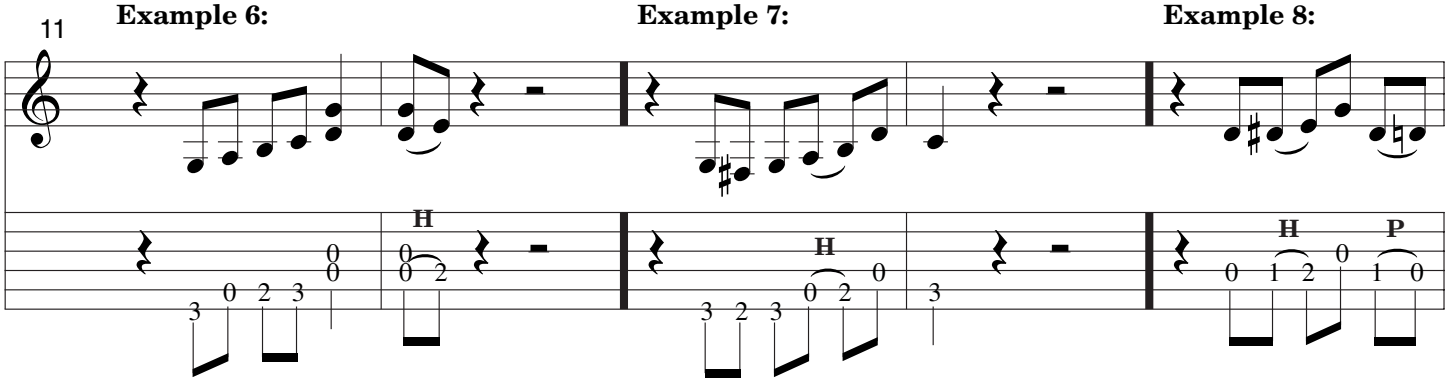
Example 5:



Example 6:

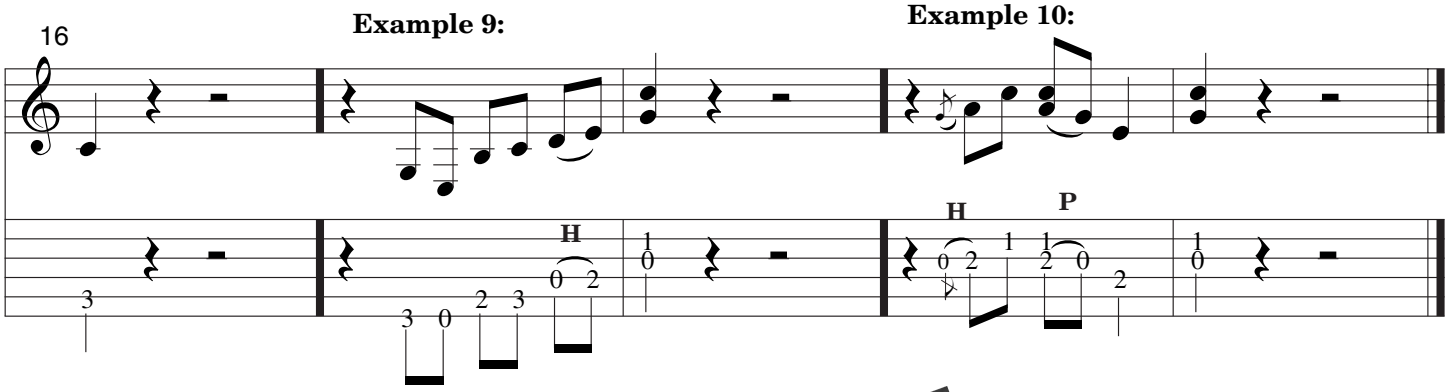
Example 7:

Example 8:



Example 9:

Example 10:



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JAM TUNES

Steve Palazzo and "Forked Deer"

In this issue's "Jam Tunes" column we offer Steve Palazzo's arrangement of the classic fiddle tune "Forked Deer." Steve, a guitar teacher from Santa Cruz, California, was featured way back in Volume 1, Number 3 of this magazine. Shortly after we did the feature Steve released his first solo album *Home Sweet Home* to rave reviews. He is now hard at work on a new project which will include this version of "Forked Deer." We have included the whole cut on our audio companion for this issue. The transcription is from Steve's first solo on the slow version.

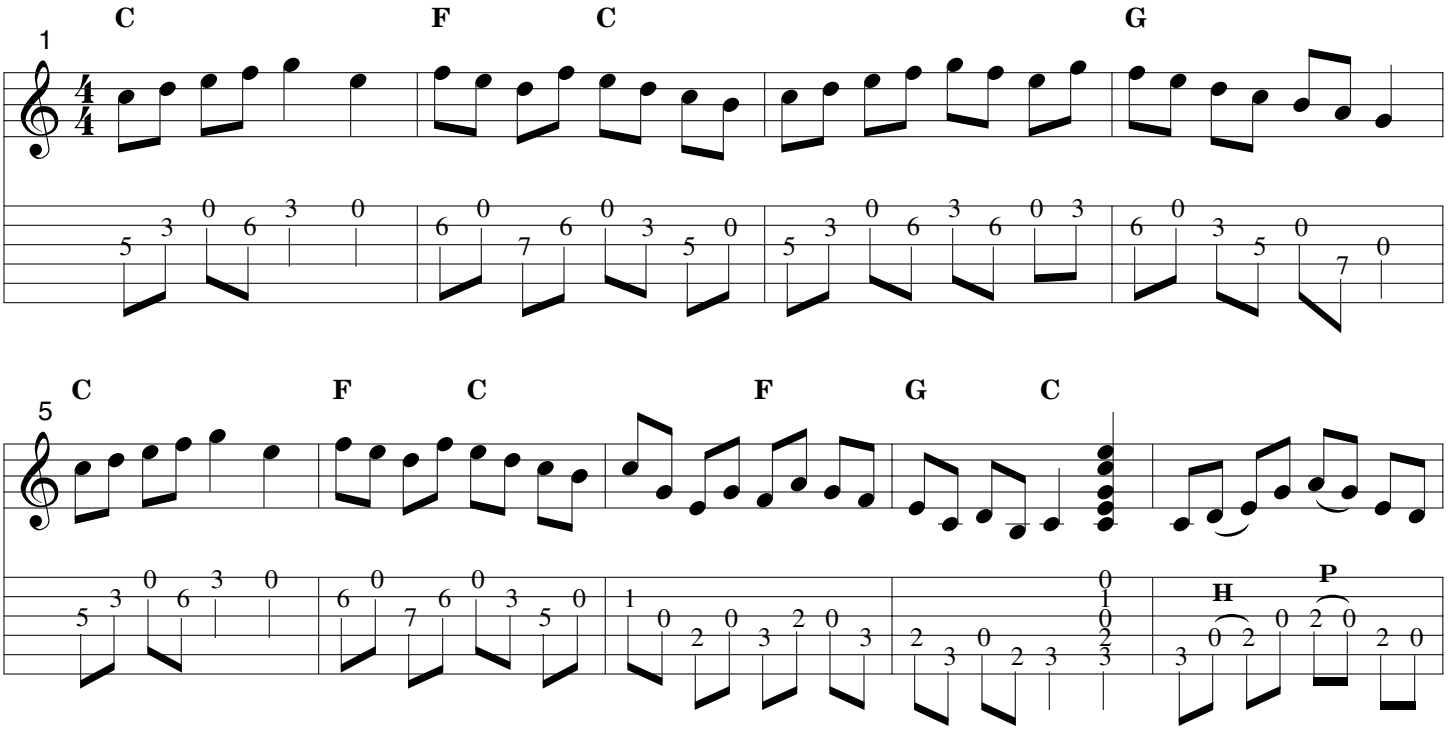
Helping Steve out on the recording are David Grier on second guitar, David Rengers on mandolin, and Billy Ruduck on bass. David Grier joins Steve on about five of the cuts on the new recording. The project will be called *When The Spring Time Comes Again* and should be out later this year. In addition to some flatpicking tunes, Steve says the project will feature several vocal duets and some fingerstyle blues.

Steve's teaching schedule occupies most of his time these days. He currently has about 60 active students. If you would like to study with Steve, but can't make it to Santa Cruz, you can join him at this summer's second session of the Puget Sound Guitar Workshop in August.

Forked Deer

Arranged by Steve Palazzo

Capo 2



Forked Deer (con't)

Flatpicking Guitar Magazine pays tribute to

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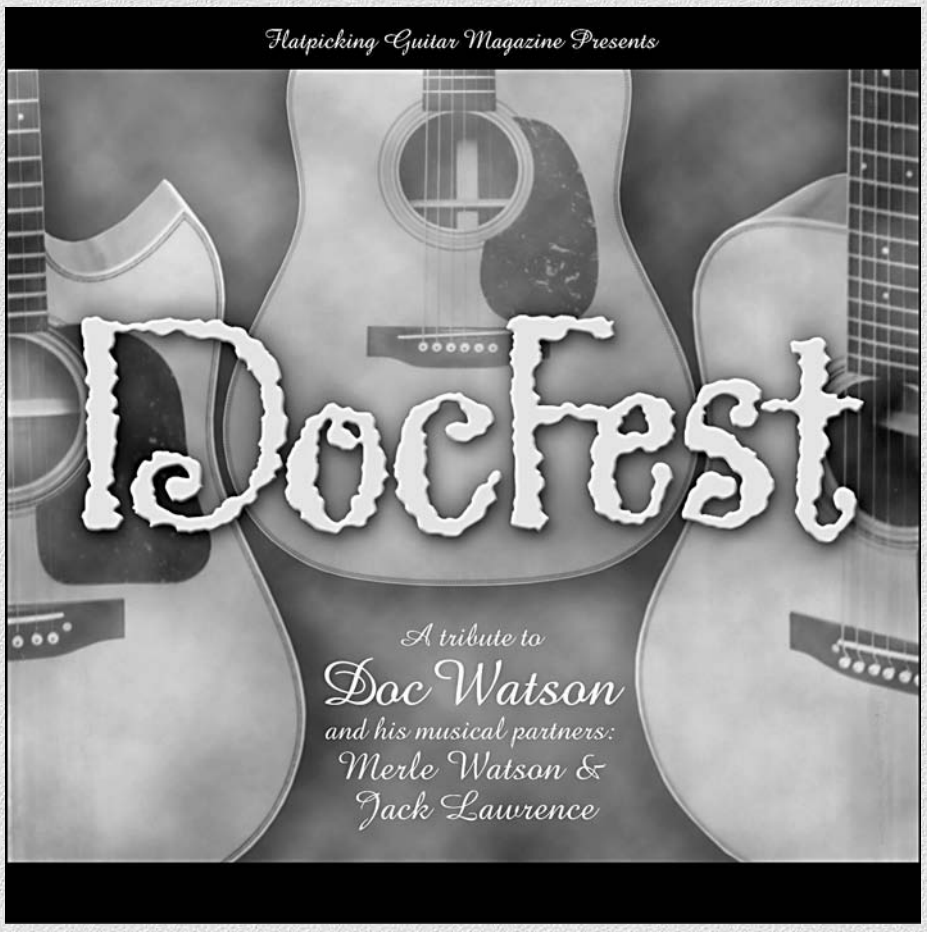

This CD includes eighteen tunes by many of today's top flatpickers. Each of the artist on this project were inspired to learn the song that they perform after first hearing the song performed by Doc Watson with one of his musical partners Merle Watson or Jack Lawrence. The CD includes Fourteen Vocals Songs and Four Instrumental Tunes as follows:

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Train That Carried My Girl From Town	Brad Davis & Whitewater
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Gypsy Jazz Guitar

by Paul Mehling

Finesse

This issue we're still absorbing Django's recording of "Finesse" from 1939.

I left you with the question of how an Fm6 chord can be made up of all the same (or nearly the same) pitches (notes) as a Dhalf-diminshed. The answer is as simple as two words that sound the same but have different meanings—these are called homonyms. For example, "meet" and "meat" have the same sounds to your ears, but have completely different meanings. In the same way, Fminor 6, D half-diminshed and Bb9 (without the Bb) have a lot of notes in common.

For the sake of clarity and thorough understanding let's just spell them out: the pitches or notes you'll recognize, and the roman numerals are like the Nashville number system—they make it easy to transpose! Capital Roman numerals mean Major scale intervals and lower-case Roman numerals mean minor scale intervals. If this is confusing try playing the notes on the guitar and then look at the intervals as numbers. Scales are easy if you remember that there are only 8 notes in a major scale! Not really that much to track. A major triad would be C E G or I III V, a minor triad would be C Eb G or I iii V.

Fm6=
F Ab C D
I ii V VI

Dhalfdim=
D F Ab C
I ii v vii

Bb9(no Bb) =
(Bb) D F Ab C
(I) III V vii IX

Why bother? Glad you asked! If you were improvising over a tune that had these three chords in it, you'd probably be freaking out, am I right?

But now that you have compared all three chords and "deconstructed," them, all you need now is a way to approach playing

them-which leads us to arpeggios, one of the building-blocks of Django,s style!
Arpeggios are generally made up of chord tones, for example C-E-G (the triad for a C major chord). C-E-G is the arpeggio. It's really simple. Add the seven to the chord to make a C7, or C dominant chord, and you'll have the notes C-E-G-Bb. At the 8th fret, on the top four (highest) strings play a C chord.

Now strum this slowly from low to high, C E G C. That's an arpeggio. Now pick each note separately. Once you've gotten comfortable with that (don't bite off more than you can chew—it's the road to frustration!) try strumming just the four notes C G E C from top to bottom. Now, as above, pick each note separately.

When that gets easy, add the seventh and pay attention to what that does to your picking pattern!
(diag 2, 7th note is played on B string with 4th finger, all other notes are one per string as above)

Some arpeggios fit more easily over quarter notes, some more easily over triplets. It's up to you to decide which is easier for you to play, and then work on the things that are more difficult until it's all equally easy (or equally difficult for you "the glass-is-half-empty," people).

One last thing about this transcription of Finesse is the little problem of the original recording is in Db. This makes for a very easy transposition up 1 fret (or a half-step), and another aspect of your musicianship to sharpen.

Next Time: ear training and ornamentations! Stay tuned.

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THE O-ZONE

by Orrin Star

Cattle in the Cane

Fiddle tunes are sometimes like depth charges—you can be aware of a tune for a long time without having any particular feeling for it and then one day Boom it just hits you and you have to learn it.

Last winter I took Rickie Simpkin's fine *Dancing on the Fingerboard* CD (Pinecastle 1063) along on a road trip to play in my car. Sometime around my third listening "Cattle in the Cane" (aka track 2) just knocked me on my butt.

Though the tune has enjoyed a certain popularity among flatpickers (Tony R. plays it with Rickie on this CD and has himself recorded it a couple times before, once with Dan C.) it was Rickie's fiddle lines that won me over; my arrangement is based on his.

There's something primally satisfying about the way this tune sits on the fretboard; there are certain intervals that I would never have arrived at by noodling on the guitar but which make perfect sense now that the fiddle has alerted me to them.

I take it twice through, starting with a basic version and then stretching out some. Two things that you need to pay particular attention to are: i) the fact that the first note of the B-part occurs just ahead of the measure and is accented. (Can you say "rest stroke"?) ii) the strums in the B-part. They should all be a little quieter than than the melody notes (but not slower). And a couple of them—indicated by parentheses in the tab—should be very quiet and subtle; almost subliminal.

Brooklyn Bluegrass Maestro, Orrin Star is an award-winning guitar, banjo and mandolin player. The 1976 National Flatpicking Champion, he has toured and recorded widely, appeared on A Prairie Home Companion *and is the author of* Hot Licks for Bluegrass Guitar. *See www.flatpick.com/ostar.*

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Cattle in the Cane

Arranged by Orrin Star

Cattle In The Cane (con't)

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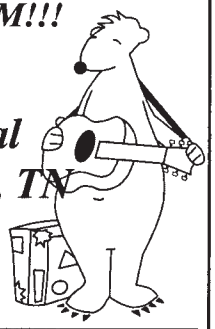

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The Blues: "Frogs for Snakes"

by Dix Bruce

As that great song "The Birth of the Blues" says: "The Southland gave birth to the blues." The blues in turn gave birth to jazz, rock, rap, bluegrass and heavily influenced gospel and just about every other music that's come along since. It's truly the parent of most of what we think of as American music. To understand or play American music, one needs to be familiar with and understand the blues. And, don't forget, the first half of "bluegrass" is "blue"!

In this column, we'll learn a blues melody in the key of E over a typical twelve bar blues form. The song is called "Frogs for Snakes." The title comes from a song by Sonny Boy Williamson in which he sings about "fattenin' frogs for snakes." I've always thought that was one of the most evocative images I've heard in music.

A few things distinguish "Frogs for Snakes" from a lot of other blues. First of all, the melody makes liberal use of double stops where we fret and pick two notes/strings at the same time. Also, we'll add a C7, which we can think of as a sharp five chord, to measure 10 (M10) of the chord progression. In most other blues progressions M9 & M10 would both be the five chord, in this case the B7. Finally, M11 & M12 have a quick chordal "turnaround" with one beat each of E, E7, A, and Am. One could simply stay on the E chords, but these chord changes give the progression a nice feeling of movement.

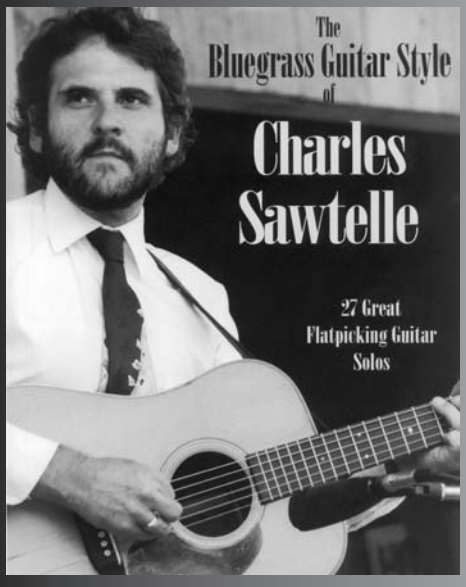
We jump right into the double stops in M1. As noted in the music, fret the D natural with the first finger of your fretting hand; fret the B with your second finger. You'll notice that the melody is written in triplets. With triplets we play three notes over the space of one quarter note. For example, we count a measure of triplets in 4/4 like this: "ONE-two-three, TWO-two-three, THREE-two-three, FOUR-two-three." If you have trouble playing it, listening to the CD will make it instantly clear. Slide up to the first double stop of each triplet. Once you can play the triplets, you've pretty much got the whole tune licked!

As I mentioned above, M10 has a C7 chord. Though it would be more typical in a blues of this type to stay on the B7 chord for both M9 & M10, I wanted to give it just the tiniest of twists to pull the ear a little off base.

I've written the music to reflect the recording. If you play another solo on the tune, don't play M13 but rather go back up to M1. Play M13 the last time only. The recording on the CD is a bit longer than usual. We let the band play an extra chorus with no lead so that you can practice the melody to "Frogs for Snakes" or your own solos and licks. As you are improvising, don't forget to play the C7 to B7 change in M10.

"Frogs for Snakes" is from my latest book/CD set *BackUP TRAX: Basic Blues for Guitar*. The set teaches this song plus thirteen others by providing a hot band for the student to jam along with. Thanks to Mel Bay for letting *Flatpicking Guitar* excerpt this tune and the backup track from the CD.

Dix's newest book/CD set is titled BackUP TRAX: Basic Blues for Guitar. *It is available from Musix, PO Box 231005, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523. TOLL FREE: 1-877-219-0441. Complete info is available at: musixnow.com Dix's book of Jerry Garcia acoustic guitar transcriptions from the Garcia/Grisman recording* Shady Grove *(excerpted in* Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*) is scheduled for publication in mid-2002.*



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Frogs for Snakes

Transcribed by Dix Bruce

Music Theory:
Mastering the Fingerboard
Technical Studies for Flatpickers

by Michel A. Maddux

Beating the mid-Winter Blues

Last weekend was the Mid-Winter Bluegrass Festival, held annually in Denver. It's always a terrific lineup, and a chance to get out of the house and hang out with pickers for a weekend. On Saturday morning I hosted the guitar workshop along with Bull Harman and John Lowell, both great flatpickers.

Several of the questions that came up from the flatpickers and interested parties in the audience were about memorization. How do you go about memorizing a new tune? Is there any special thing that I should do to help memorize tunes faster?

Memorization Technique

A couple of tips come to mind. First, make certain that you're playing the tune exactly the same way every time. Write out the tune. Make certain that you use the same fingering every time through.

Most tunes have key licks or runs that repeat, that are really the signature of the tune. Figure out what they are and you'll have part of the tune down right away. If it is a vocal tune, think of the words. (for example "...well, the nine pound hammer...") The first thing you hear in your head when you think of those words is the melody. Look at the tune. Notice the key signature. Look at the chords. Visualize yourself playing the chords while you hear the melody in your head.

The Form

Next, think about the form of the tune. Is it an AABB tune? (That means, play the A part, the first section, twice, then play the B part twice). Many fiddle tunes fall into this category, such as "Soldiers Joy" and "Sally Goodin."

Is it an AABA tune? In this type of tune, you play the A section twice, the B section once, then the A section again—all of that is one time through the tune. An example of this type of tune is the Frank Wakefield tune "New Camptown Races."

Is it an AABBCC tune? Some tunes have three parts that repeat. An example of the AABBCC is the great Byron Berline tune, "Huckleberry Hornpipe." Some old time players have three parts to "Ragtime Annie": the third section goes up to the key of F.

There are other forms, including tunes that don't fit any of these exactly, but these three forms are the most common.

Break it Down

Break it down in sections. Begin with the A section of the tune. For some tunes you may want to practice and memorize even smaller pieces, like a single lick. Set the metronome at the fastest speed that you can play smoothly all the way through the section; for most tunes, this is a pretty slow setting at first. As you get the tune under your fingers you will gradually increase the metronome setting to get it up to performance speed.

Identify portions of the tune that have a specific hand position, or fingering, such as a scale pattern in first position, or a crosspicking lick in 7th position. If you are working through "Jerusalem Ridge," the first section is in 5th position, but for the average bluegrass, flatpick, or fiddle tune, the first time through will be in first position.

Think About It!

So, you can now think about the tune like this: It is an AABB tune, in the key of G, capo II. The changes go through G, F, C, D, in the A section, and G, F, G, D in the B section. The intro lick is the Georgia Shuffle lick, and the first lick of the tune uses a slide from third to fifth fret on the G string. The next lick, the F lick, is a walk down from a portion of the F Major scale. The B section uses cross picking in G and F from third and first frets respectively.

What tune was that? I suspect that if you read carefully through the previous description, you may notice that I was describing "Salt Creek." We haven't played a lick, but you can visualize the tune in your head.

Repeat It

Now, play the tune at least twice or more time through, exactly the same way, every practice session, which means every day, right?

Before you play it, think about the form and the melody. Learning how to think about music on the guitar is the key!

Moving On Up the Neck

A popular and favorite jam session fiddle tune and recorded by everyone from Norman Blake to David Grier is "Whiskey Before Breakfast."

Take a close look at the low and high forms of the song. Notice that in each position you are playing nearly the same notes, but an octave higher in the high position.

"Whiskey" is an AABB form in the key of D. The opening lick is a portion of the D Major scale. In the B section, the tune goes to an E minor chord.

As a reminder and for new readers, the first and 7th position D scales are shown below. For a complete treatment of the D major scale in all 7 positions, see my article in the previous issue of *FGM*.

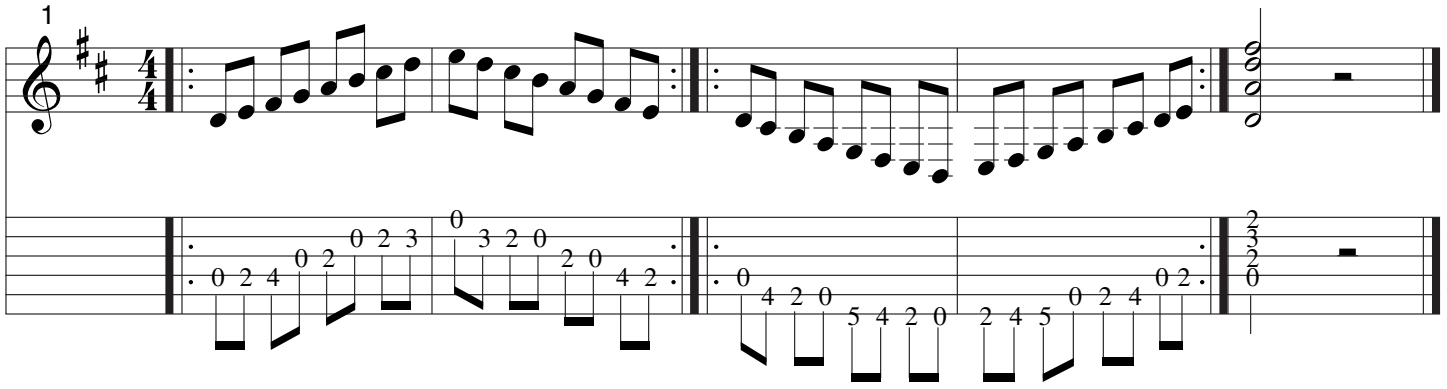
I like to use the Drop D tuning; keeping the D "drone" sound going during the rest of the song makes this ideal for a solo guitar.

Have fun and keep on pickin'!

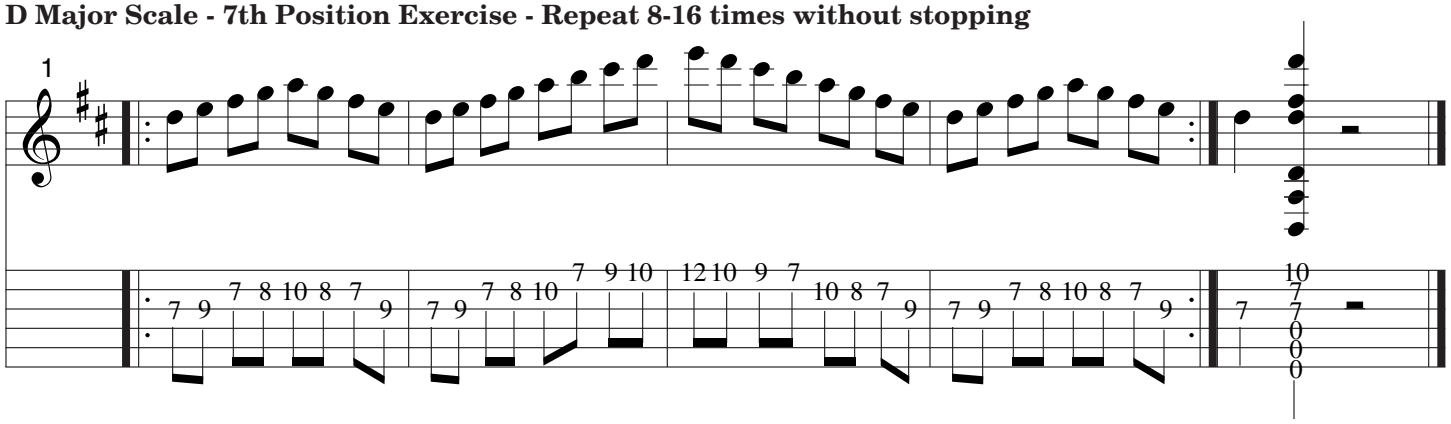
About the Author: In the '90's, Mike could frequently be found in the final round of flatpickers at the National Flatpicking Championships. He presently performs, writes, and teaches in Colorado Springs and the western United States.

Check the Colorado Springs newspaper listings for the "Bertye Maddux Band." His "Ol Banjo" CD is available through Flatpicking Guitar Magazine. *Please contact him with questions or comments c/o this magazine.*

D Major Scale in Drop D tuning - First Position Exercise - Repeat 8-16 times without stopping



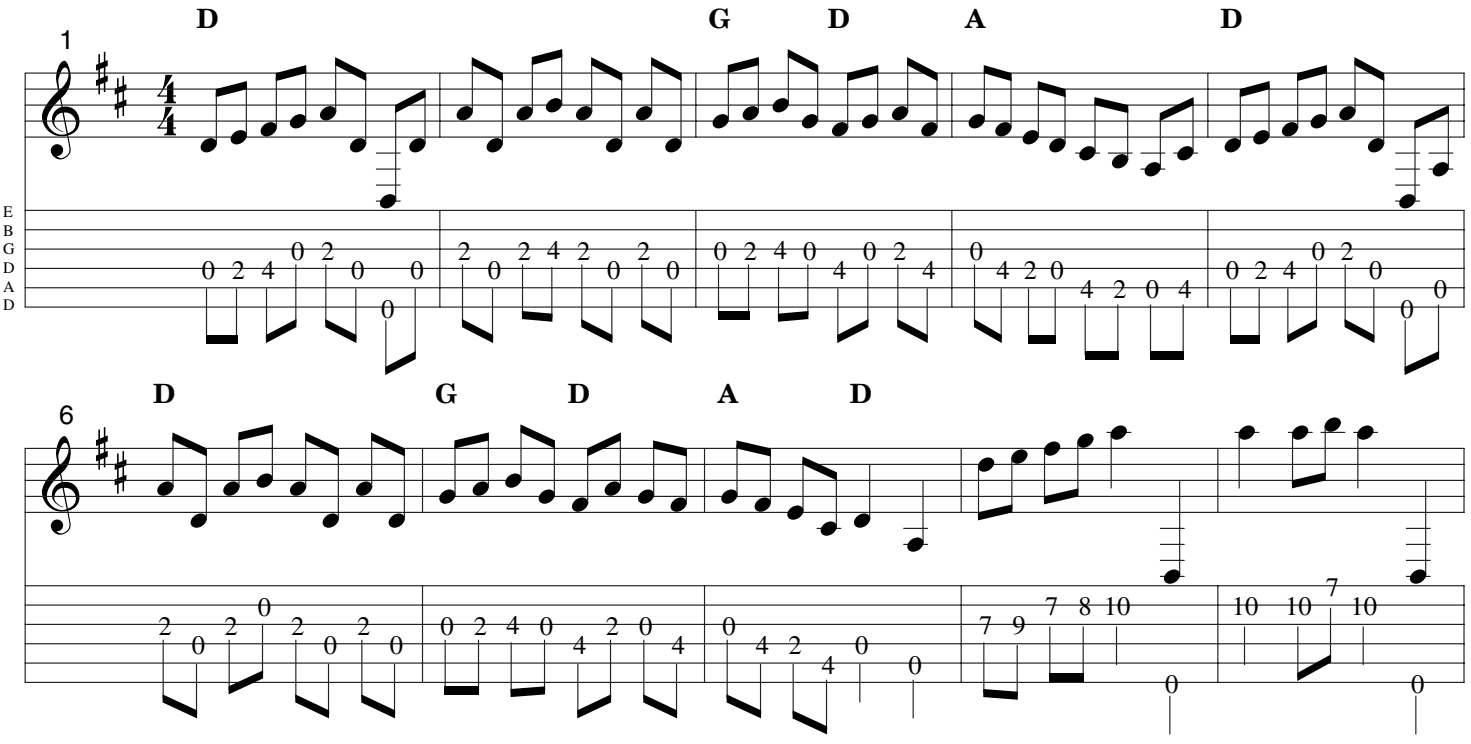
D Major Scale - 7th Position Exercise - Repeat 8-16 times without stopping



Whiskey Before Breakfast

Arranged by Mike Maddux

Drop D Tuning



Whiskey Before Breakfast (con't)

Gospel Guitar

with Harold Streeter

Intros and Tags

As mentioned in the last column, we're going to do something different this time around. In lieu of a gospel song, what follows is a collection of intro and tag combinations that you may find useful for kicking off hundreds of gospel, country, and bluegrass songs. Some are more appropriate for slow tempo songs, while others are intended for moderate to fast tempo songs. This is by no means a definitive collection. First, there is no such thing, and second, all of the combinations are limited to the key of G—the most common bluegrass setting. Rather, what follows here is just an assembly of bits, pieces, influences, and conjurings cobbled together over the years that work for me.

Traditionally, intros have been, and still are for the most part, based on the last 4 bars of songs in the folk, country, bluegrass, and gospel genres. Two models that come to mind are "Red River Valley"and "Worried Man Blues." If you play either of those tunes or can hear them in your head, fast-forward to the last line and take a listen. The melodies in the last lines of the two tunes are of course not the same, but the chord progressions are. In the key of G for example, the chord progression of the last line in both tunes consists of two measures of D followed by two measures of G. It's a structure sometimes referred to as a "5-1" progression, respectively named for the fifth and first notes of a major scale.

The intro examples here, derived from that structure, consist of four components; a "kick-off," followed by two measures of the "5" or D chord, then two measures of the "1" or G chord, and a measure which leads to a vocal or introduces another instrument. The kick-off (so called because it kicks off the tune) can be either a full or partial measure of notes which often descend to some starting note in the D chord. Once in the D chord, anything goes, so long as the phrases are related to a D chord. The following two measures of G consist, either fully or partially again, of a "tag," and the lead-in measure immediately following consists of notes which are still based on the G chord.

Now, being that the title of this column is "Intros and Tags," a word or two about tags is in order. Unlike chord runs (those that pass from chord to chord), tags are the runs we all tend to collect and play that function just like punctuation. They're periods at the end of sentences, in other words, and when playing in the key of G, we call them "G-runs." In addition to their use in the body of songs (typically in the 15th bar, and sometimes also in the 3rd and/or 7th bars), they're integral parts of intros because they tell everybody you've finished, and that it's time to sing or do something else.

Going through the intros, Variation 1 is perhaps the easiest and most typical of the bunch, and it works well for slow to moderate tunes. The kick-off consists of just three quarter notes that descend to the root note of the D chord, and after a little meandering, culminates in a simple half-measure tag.

Variation 2 is similar to the first in that it descends to the D chord again, and finishes with another half-measure tag. The only real difference is that a full D chord is played in the first D chord measure.

Variation 3 is a little more involved than the first two. It ends with another half-measure tag, and is suitable perhaps for faster tunes. Variation 4 lends itself to moderate to fast tempo tunes and it features a full tag, while Variation 5 is perhaps best for slow to moderate tempo tunes - this one comes with a bluesy sounding tag. For Variation 6, slow to moderate tempo tunes with a swing feel seem to come to mind. This is the first variation with an ascending kick-off, and it features a double-tag.

Again, this is not a complete collection of intros. The key of G alone offers many other variations, not to mention all of the other keys in need of exploration. You can, however, expand the potential of the intros shown here through component interchangeability. For example, you may find that you prefer following the kick-off in Variation 3 with the two D chord measures in Variation 5, followed by the tag in Variation 2, and so on. By experimenting with them, you'll make them your own, and almost anything goes. In addition, for songs you feel are in need of a little symmetry, all of the intros may double as endings.

If you have any intros, or tags for that matter you'd like to share (most of us collect such things after all), Dan Miller said that if space permits, maybe we could fit them in. In the meantime, please pay us a visit at our web site; www.lewalt.com. Speaking of web sites, one worthy of mention is www.bluegrasslyrics.com. The site is a gold mine in that it features lyrics for hundreds of gospel and bluegrass songs all for the very cheap price of free!

Harold is currently working on a 5-book mandolin and banjo series for Mel Bay Publications (titles to be announced as they become available), and has played lead guitar, 5-string banjo, and mandolin the past four years for the "Riders of the Rockin' B", a traditional western (Sons of the Pioneers, etc), Texas swing, and bluegrass band, in the Pacific Northwest.

1st Variation
1
G
pickup
D
G
tag
5
G
to vocal
2nd Variation
G
pickup
D
9
D
G
tag
to vocal
H
P
H
3rd Variation
13
G
pickup
D
G
tag
H P
P
S
4th Variation
17
to vocal
G
pickup
D
H
H
H

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"Valse" is a Russian, balalaika-styled waltz in the key of C minor. It is from one of my books *Classics for Flatpicking Guitar*. This is an original composition written specifically to capture the flowing, haunting minor type of waltz melody found often in the music of Russia.

Actually, I was walking along a street in Frankfurt, Germany, many years ago and saw two young street musicians sitting on a street corner (one playing balalaika and one playing guitar). They were playing music very similar in feel and style to "Valse."

I hope you like this piece. I find it quite enjoyable to play on flatpicking guitar. It also works extremely well on mandolin. If played on mandolin, be sure to use tremolo on all of the half notes and dotted half notes.

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Valse

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PICKIN' FIDDLE TUNES

by Adam Granger

LITTLE SADIE

Hello flatpickers, one and all! Well, as I sit down to write this column, I must confess that fiddle tunes are over the hills and far away, to quote from the old joke*. Here's why: *FGM* editor Dan Miller invited me to contribute a number to his Doc Watson tribute album, and that contribution turned out to be *Little Sadie*. I got to thinking what a good subject the song would be for a column—its nonfiddleness notwithstanding—and the result is in your hands. Anyhow, *Little Sadie* is in a musical category best described thusly:

"I'm a young guy; I took a girl out for a walk one evening; I stabbed her (or, alternately, shot her), for no reason that is revealed in this song; I got caught, and now, poor me, boo-hoo, I must hang, or spend 99 years in jail (or 41 years, or 99 years and one dark day. . .); oh, and by the way, in addition to no word of explanation for this heinous deed, I also will offer no words of remorse or pity (except, of course, for myself)"

It's a long title, I know, but a thoroughly apt one. For reasons I can't fathom, there are many examples—probably hundreds—of this type of tune, going all the way back through the Child Ballads and the English folk song repertoires, always with the elements listed above, *especially* the unrepentent poor-me parts. (And they say the youth of *today* have no morals!) It is only in the spirit of the folk process and the furtherance of oral tradition that I offer this reprobate of a song here at all. By the way, two other popular denizens of this category are *Knoxville Girl* and *Tom Dooley*. Sheesh! At least the guy who wrote *Little Sadie* knew her name and titled the song after her!

READING ***EASYTAB***

Easytab is like conventional tablature, except that timing notation has been streamlined and simplified. Since fiddle tunes are comprised mainly of eighth notes, *Easytab* uses the eighth note as its basic unit. An eighth rest is indicated by a dot. Therefore, a note with a dot after it is a quarter note, and a note with three dots after it is a half note. There are a total of eight notes and rests per measure.

FOR BEGINNERS

Pick with an alternating style: down-up-down-up-down-up etc. The first note of each measure should be a downstroke, the last an upstroke. **Include rests** in this alternating pattern. This keeps you "in synch", playing downstrokes on the beats, so that, no matter what the configuration of notes and rests in an eight-unit measure, the right hand plays them down-up-down-up-down-up-down-up.

All right, let's look at the two solos offered here. First a few ground rules: "*s*" is a slide; "*p*" is a pull-off; notes tied with vertical bars are to be strummed either up or down, depending on where they fall in the measure (see *Figuring Out Pick Direction*, below); there is a crooked measure (in this case, six-beats) at the end of the form; and, finally, there are extra vamp beats after the solos and before the vocals come back in: eight in the first break and sixteen in the second. Oh yeah, one more thing before you start pettin' this puppy: read the contents of the box below.

FIGURING OUT PICK DIRECTION

My form of tablature (which I call Easytab), as with normal tablature and as with standard music notation, offers an easy system for figuring out timing and—of obvious value to us flatpickers—pick direction. Easytab contains a total of eight notes and rests (dots) per measure. These are eighth notes and rests; they're counted "one and two and three and four and", and should be picked "down up down up down up down up". Include rests in this alternating pattern. This is fairly easy to sort out in a measure of normal old eighth notes, but to determine pick direction in a measure with slides or pull-offs in it, you must find out the value of the slide or hammer-on: how many notes it equals (is it a slow slide or a fast slide?). To do this, add the total notes and rests of the measure. The value of the slide or hammer-on is whatever number it takes for the measure to equal eight.

I think I just figured out an even more confusing way to say this, but instead, by way of example, let's look at the first three measures of the first break: The first slide, from the second to the fourth fret on the G string, would, of course, be a downstroke (starting on the first note of the measure). We know it's a fast slide, with a note value of one, because there are seven other notes and rests in the measure and we can't go over eight. The third fret B string is also picked down. Moving into the second measure, we've got another fast slide followed by two more downstrokes (rests are happening on the upstrokes, right?) followed by a two-note-long slide which takes up the last note of the measure and the first note of the next. Since the slide starts on the last note of the measure, it's picked with an upstroke. The slide follows through the the first note of the next measure, which would have been a down had we picked it, followed by a rest on an up. We then pick two pairs of notes, both on downs, and end the measure with two second-fret notes picked down up.

Do you have to pick this way to get good on the guitar? No. Do famous pickers such as Tony Rice pick religiously this way? No. But flatpicking in sync with the beat is a great habit to have, even if your purpose in life, stylistically, turns out to be to break it. Know what you're doing, even if you don't know why you're doing it. . .

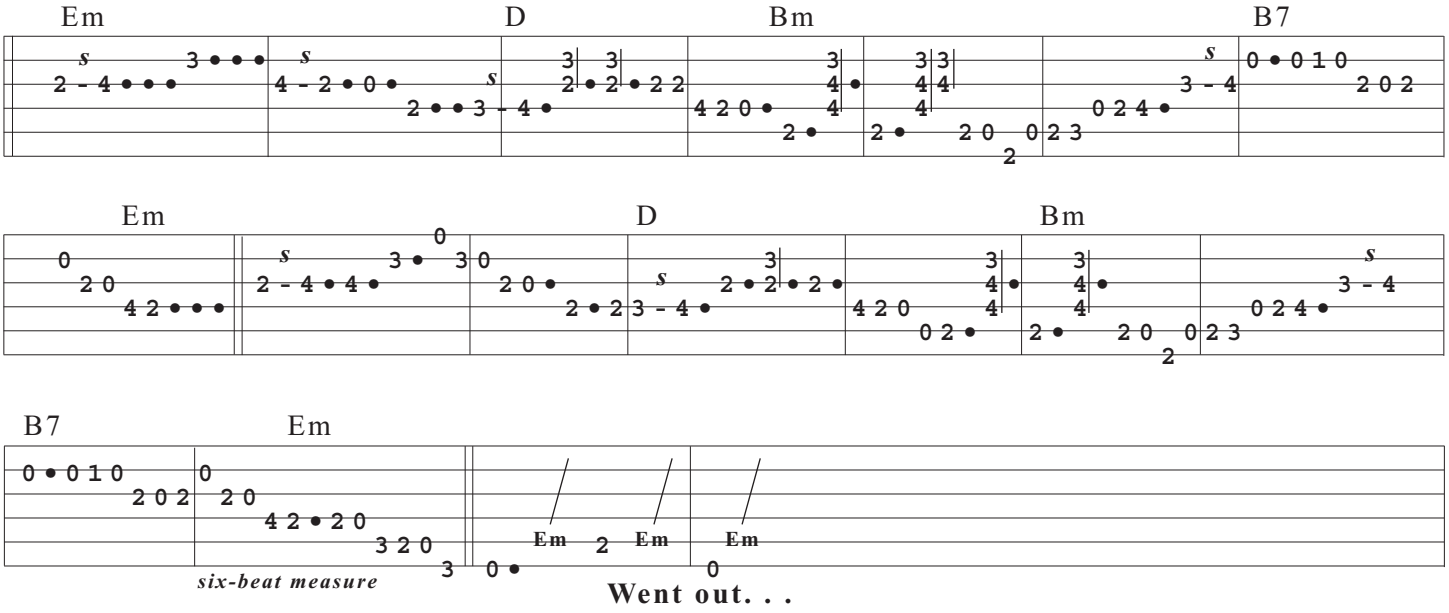
*In case you've been under a rock all your life and haven't heard it, here's the joke: A man is sitting on his front porch when a girl walks slowly by singing very badly. The man asks, "Can you sing 'Over the Hills and Far Away'?" The girl replies that she can, and the man says, "Good!"

On the *FGM* Companion CD, I play these solos with a vocal verse stuck in between them so you can see how this stuff fits against the lyrics. Also, these are essentially the same solos I play on the Watson Tribute CD, albeit quite a bit faster. Notice that, true to my style, both of these solos maintain loyalty to the melody of the song, as opposed to taking off on flights of improvisational fancy. Also, I've set *Little Sadie* in E minor, whereas you'll generally find it in D minor or A minor. It's a little harder in this key—there are, for example, more fourth-fret notes, and the B minor chord that pops up in the fourth measure may be new to some of you—but fresh and interesting opportunities are presented by using this relatively unusual setting. Finally, be patient and careful about timing and pick direction and you'll do fine.

All right, as Briscoe Darling, ersatz patriarch of the family of musical hillbillies the Dillards used to portray on *The Andy Griffith Show*, used to say: "Jump in and hang on!"

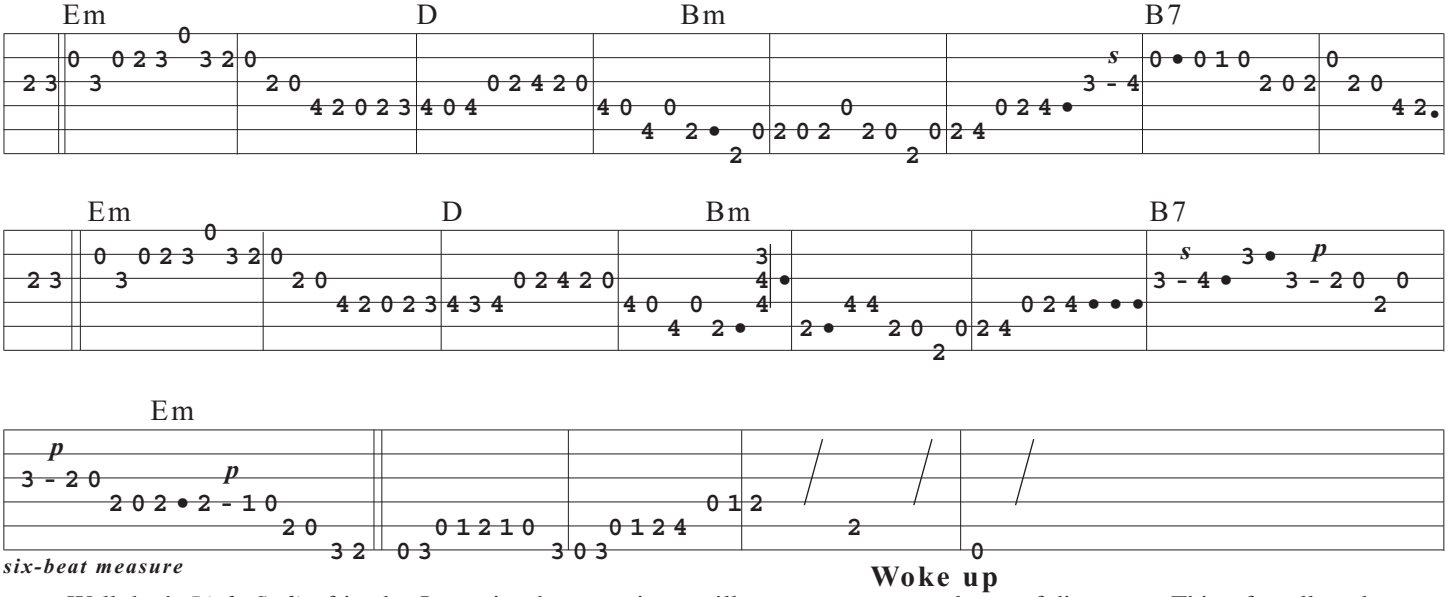
first break

KEY: Em



second break

KEY: Em



Well that's *Little Sadie*, friends. I promise that next time we'll return to our normal area of discourse. This, after all, makes two consecutive times we've strayed from the fiddle-tune flock. I hope that your response to this second little sheep who has gone astray is not "bah, bah, bah". I can assure you that there won't be a third—at least not right away. . .

Adam Granger has had two customs-related experiences with Canadian travel:

In 1968, a young hippie Adam visited his brother in Montreal. While there, be bought a large crockery jug (to play) at an antique store. He was detained at Chicago O'Hare Customs while officers found a mirror small enough to fit into the mouth of the jug. Trace amounts of what ultimately turned out to be rum were found inside, and Adam was allowed to continue his travels.

In 2000, Adam, flying to Canada to do a workshop, was about to be refused entry by Ottawa Airport Customs because he, stupidly, didn't have a passport or birth certificate with him, when the officer noticed it was his birthday. She let him enter with a mild admonition.

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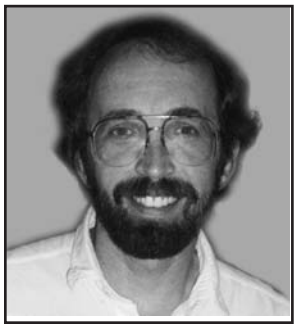
Bluegrass Classics

by Steve Pottier



Designing a Break For "Think Of What You've Done"

Flatpickers spend a lot of time on fiddle tunes, but if you play in a bluegrass band, fiddle tunes will only be about ten percent of the play list, and the rest will be vocals. Time to work on some breaks to the songs! But for players who haven't done it, it can be a bit of a mystery.

Start with the melody— the musical line the lead singer is singing. All of the great guitar players stress this. I've heard Chris Jones, Orrin Starr, Tim Stafford, Kenny Smith, and Scott Nygaard stress this. Every time I hear a workshop, the melody is stressed as the starting point. I think one reason it gets mentioned so often is that beginners often don't play the melody. Roland White told me that the best way to get your own style is to play the melody, and you will find your own ways to accent and ornament the melody just thinking about it. All the great bands in bluegrass have players who play the melody. OK, I'm ranting and raving- just take time to figure it out. Maybe it won't be perfect at first, but you can start with whatever outline of the melody you can figure out, and refine it as your ear gets better. Here's a hint—get a copy of Pete Wernick's *Bluegrass Songbook*. It has the melodies to lots of popular bluegrass songs in tab, and it's a good place to start. Another hint- once you know the key of the song, try to figure out the held out notes first, they will be in the chord you're holding for that part (see my column *FGM* Vol. 3 No. 3).

"Think of What You've Done" from the Stanley Brothers is a great song. I've tabbed out the melody to Carter's vocal as near as I could make out (note that the tab is in G, and you would normally sing it in B or C if you're a guy). Try to get the phrasing- notice that "heart to heart" is sung "heaaaaaart t'heart," not "heart to heart." You can make your break more expressive by trying to incorporate some of those vocal nuances.

I made up the first break trying to stick as close as I could to Carter's melody, filling in with strums and a few hammers. Works pretty good even without trying to mess it up! Remember to keep the strums very light. You want the melody to stand out from the fill.

I started fooling with different ways to get to parts of the melody. The first four are for the opening to the break. They deviate a bit from the melody, but they still incorporate it. I took some hints from the banjo break kickoff by Ralph. I wanted to try one notier one, so I came up with #3. I kind of liked #4 the best, and used a variation of it in my final version.

The next three are for the first change to D. I like the simplicity of the first. I'm a sucker for the sound and power of double stops, hence #2. #3 is a nice smooth run, I like it too. The one I finally settled for is a little bit like the run to D in "Will You Miss Me," but just a little bit syncopated. In these first two examples it occurs to me that I identify some note or notes that I want to be sure to include or "aim for" and then try to think of a technique that would get me there. It's a little bit different fromplugging in a lick that fits the chord being played, since there is a conscious effort to fit the melody in.

The next three are going from the D back to the G ("flowers need the dew"). #1 has a nice Stanley flavor to it. Use your first and second finger to hold down the notes while you hammer with your third finger. #2 sounded kind of banjo-y to me, which I like, but it didn't seem to fit in with the rest of what was going on (too notey or modern?). #3 is kind of Tony Rice-ish, not quite what I wanted. I opted for a double stop slide (told ya) for the final version.

The final three fragments are for the part going to C ("lovin' you"). The first one really appeals to me- a slide and then a 7th going to the IV chord. Maybe I'll use that on a second break, or as a variation of my main break. #2 is a double stop run. They are just more powerful, and yes, you can be a tad sloppier with them (you are hitting two strings instead of one after all). I decided on a simpler variation of this one for the final version. Try to get something solid that you know you can pull off and still have it sound good.

The third one is actually closer to the melody than the others, but it just didn't quite speak to me. I think working with different places on the neck to get the same notes might yield some tonal possibilities that would liven it up. Carter puts a little something on the beginning of "lovin.." that could possibly be mimicked with good effect on guitar.

The final version starts with a rake, like a strum that has been arpeggiated. Simple but effective. The hammer-ons in this version definitely give it a Stanley feel, almost like the Carter family (no direct reference to Carter Stanley). I tried not to get to complicated with it, since that would put it out of context with the Stanley sound. Another way to approach this break would be with Shuffler-style crosspicking, but I thought that was pretty advanced for what I wanted to present here. It's surprising how a few simple runs,slides, hammer-ons and/or double stops can make an interesting break out of a simple melody. Try it out on some other classic bluegrass songs!

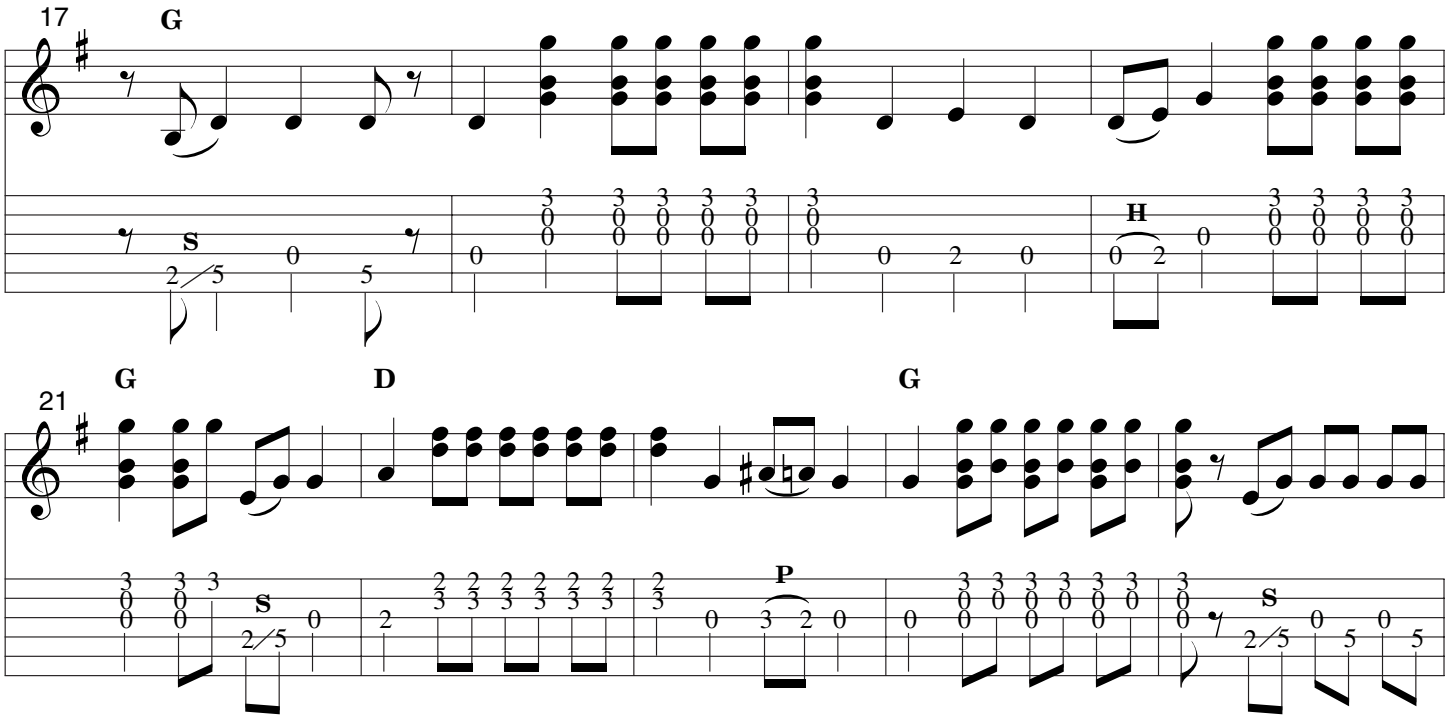
Think of What You've Done

Arranged by Steve Pottier

Melody:

1
G
Heart to heart Dear how I need you like the
6
D G C
flow - ers need the dew. Lov - in you
11
G D G
has been my life blood can't be - lieve we're real - ly through.

First Variation:



Think of What You've Done (con't)

Think of What You've Done (con't)

John McGann's Eclectic Acoustic

Fire Pocket

Chris Moore's "Firepocket" is a great flatpicking vehicle in the guitar friendly key of G. I stick fairly close to the melody notes (with a lot of interpretation) through the first two of the three parts, and then go into the improvisation zone for the third section. This piece was recorded live in the studio, and the solo wasn't really worked out in advance. I don't expect anyone to actually learn the thing note for note, but if you hear a phrase or two on the CD that you like, the notation may save a you a little deciphering time.

I'd like to mention how much fun it was recording this album (Rust Farm's *Snows of March*, available through Flatpicking Guitar Merchantile). We set up in a house during the summertime on Peaks Island, Maine, and spent 4 or 5 days rolling tape, with Alan Williams engineering and Tim O'Brien producing and playing fiddle and octave mandolin. The setting was much more relaxed than a typical recording studio, a perfect environment for "live in the studio" recording. We'd work a few hours, eat some of Chris' wife Melissa's wonderful cooking, work a few more hours, eat some more, and spent the better part of each day laughing and enjoying ourselves—a highly recommended recording technique!

John McGann (www.johnmcgann.com) is a member of Rust Farm, Wayfaring Strangers, and various freelance groups including Seamus Connolly, Joe Derrane, Rushad Eggleston, etc. A new Rust Farm CD is in the works as well as a traditional Irish album featuring flatpicked guitar, mandolin and octave mandolin.

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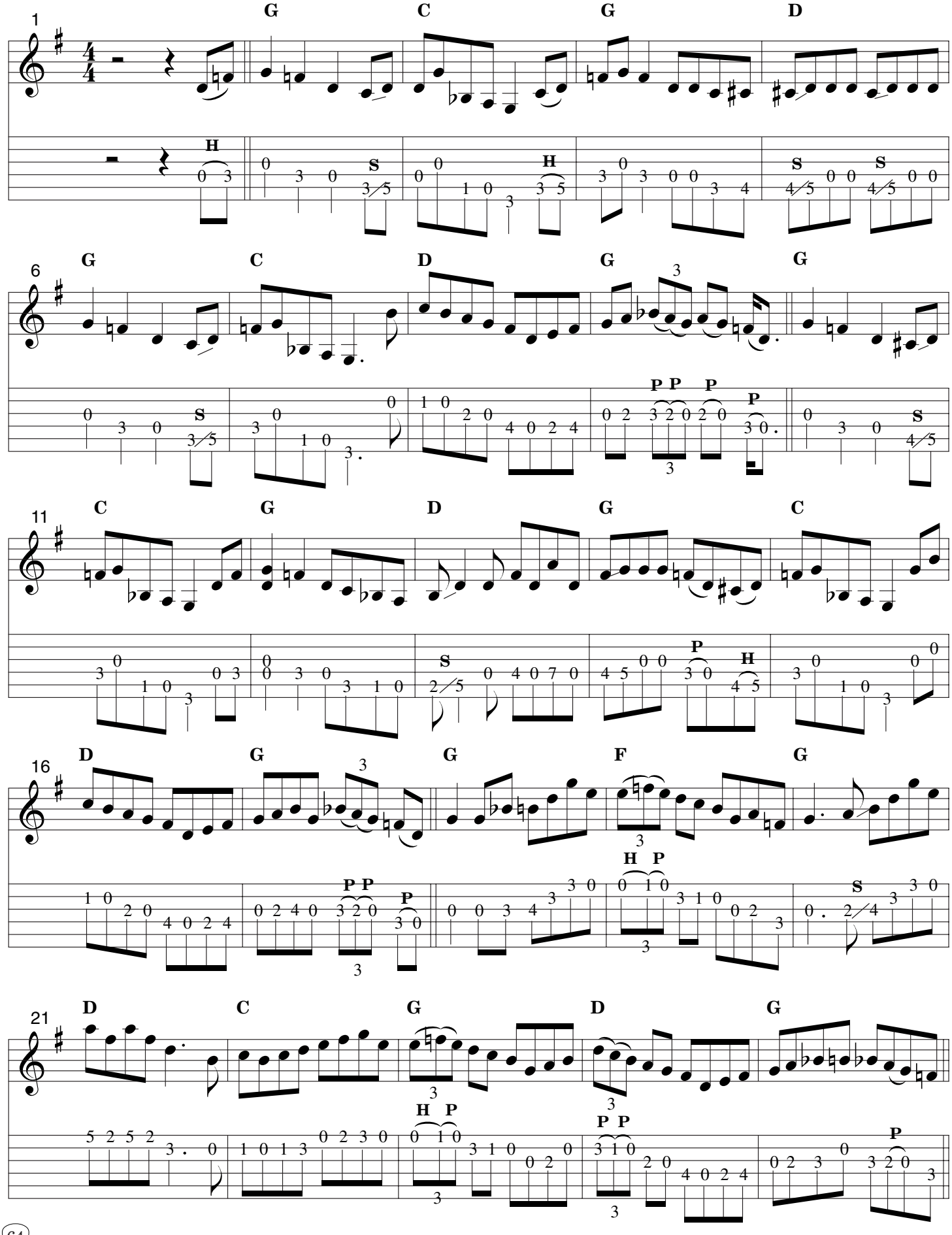
Fire Pocket



Fire Pocket (con't)

Reviews

Hot Rize
So Long Of A Journey
Sugar Hill CD 3943

reviewed by Bryan Kimsey

I have a lot of Hot Rize material—all their albums, the studio video tape, and numerous taped-from-TV tapes—but none of it, in my humble opinion, really "caught" the live band Hot Riz (which I saw over a dozen times during their 10+ years). More particularly, none of the material really "caught" Charles Sawtelle's quirky playing. The live double CD with Red Knuckles hinted at, but still didn't quite capture "The Real Sawtelle." And, as much as I love it, even his own solo CD seems a little subdued, compared to what I saw live. Live is when we really saw him take chances and play crazy stuff, and the more familiar you were with their recorded material and the more times you saw them live, the better you could appreciate his genius. So, it was with mixed feeling that I popped this CD into player. Would it capture The Real Sawtelle? Would this be the CD that I could whole-heartedly recommend to people wondering what all the fuss was about? Or would this be another one about which I said "It's great, butI wish you could've seen 'em live"?

First, a word about the recording. When Hot Rize got together to do a reunion tour, they discussed whether or not to tape the shows. They decided not to. They just wanted to play. Well, Nick Forster secretly had a show at the Boulder Theater taped and "casually mentioned it to the band the next day." The tapes were then lost as Charles Sawtelle entered the worst of his battle with leukemia. Then, a year after his death, they were found again. And this is that show, played for a very appreciative home-town crowd, without the pressure of knowing the tape machine was running.

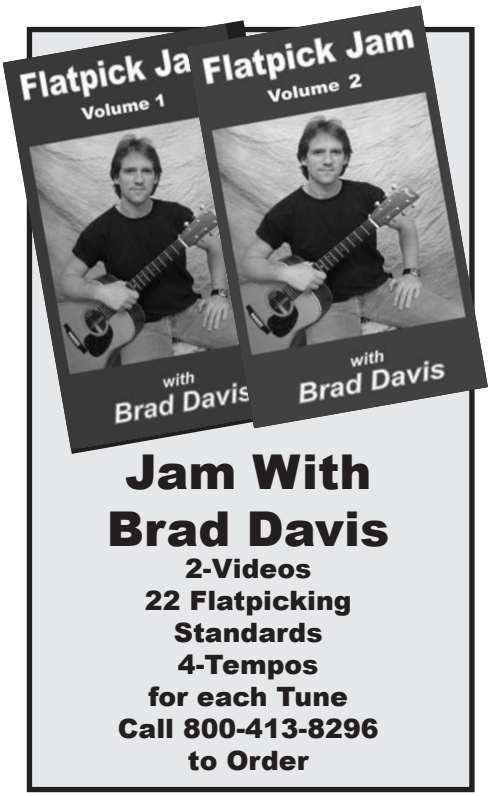
Hot Rize traditionally kicked off their sets with "Blue Night" ("the sound-check song"). Sawtelle takes a break here that starts off like his recorded version but then it.goes. It's quirky! It's unpredictable! It hinted at Clarence and Django and Freddie (King!), all together. And it was LOUD! He's got a low E and an A string ("guitar notes" as Charles might say) and he lets you know it! It was The Real Sawtelle. I grinned. The band then kicks into "Keep Your Lamp Trimmed and Burning" a tune where Sawtelle gets to call/answer with Tim O'Brien's mandolin and a tune where he typically cut loose with wild bluesy syncopation. And, yes!! He starts the second solo with one of his "rakes" across the strings and then hangs a note out there for what seems like half the song. This is definitely The Real Sawtelle. I was feeling good about this new CD. Very good. By the time the CD was over, I could unhesitatingly say "Yes! THIS is The Real Sawtelle. THIS is what I heard live!"

Every break on here is great. We've got the Rock 'n Roll Sawtelle in "Radio Boogie," the Fiddle Tune Sawtelle in "The Butcher's Dog," Ralph and Carter's and George's cousin Chuck Sawtelle in "Walkin' the Dog" and "Won't You Come and Sing For Me", and the Bluegrass Mystery himself in "Blue Night". And it's all just bursting out of the speakers with the same powerful tone that first attracted me to Sawtelle's playing. He's no wimpy guitar player—you can hear him pushing those low strings down with his pick before letting them snap loose (I saw him break a low E at Telluride). What's really fun is to compare his playing here with the recorded versions. That will really give you an idea of how unpredictable Charles could be. Every time I heard him live, he played differently. We could probably, in fact, have an entire CD of "Blue Night" and every break would be, often radically so, different.

Well, we know that this CD captures Sawtelle at his best, but what about the rest of the band? They're in fine form, too. O'Brien's voice is a little lower and fuller here than on some earlier Hot Rize things, but that's fine—he sounds great either way. Wernick's banjo playing is consistent as ever, and he gives the old phase-shifter a spin on a couple of songs. Forster's bass is fat and sassy and his voice blends with O'Brien's like a higher-pitched echo. In short, they're all in fine form. Not only does this CD capture Sawtelle at his peak, but it snags the whole band in the net, too.

There's no question in my mind that when someone asks me which 1 Hot Rize album they should buy, that this is the album I'll recommend.

Song List: Blue Night, Keep Your Lamp Trimmed And Burning, Empty Pocket Blues, Radio Boogie, Just Like You, Climbing Up A Mountain, Walkin' The Dog, Frank's Blues, A Voice On The Wind Shadows, In My Room, Nellie Kane, The Butcher's Dog, Working On A Building, Walk The Way The Wind Blows, Foggy Mountain Breakdown, High On A Mountain, Colleen Malone, Life's Too Short, Won't You Come And Sing For Me



Legacy
Doc Watson
David Holt
High Windy Audio (HW 1258)

Reviewed by Dan Miller

If Doc Watson has had an influence on your life; if you are a fan of his music, his singing, his guitar picking, harmonica playing, or his banjo picking; if you like to hear him tell stories; or if you have any interest in Doc Watson at all; you have to buy this new three-CD set. You will be very glad that you did.

On the first two CDs David Holt interviews Doc and you are given the rare opportunity to hear Doc's life story in his own words. The conversation is interspersed with Doc playing various instruments and performing the songs in the order he learned them during his life. On the first CD, Doc talks about his early years growing up blind in the mountains of North Carolina. He talks about his early musical influences, the songs his father taught him and how the old Victrola changed his life. As the story unfolds, Doc performs the tunes that were of the greatest significance in his life. You get to hear his first harmonica piece, the tunes his dad taught him on the cat skin fretless banjo, and his first guitar tunes.

On the second interview CD, Doc looks back over his career from performing on the streets of Boone, NC to becoming a National Treasure and multi Grammy-Award winner. He talks about how his career got its start, the "folk boom" era, life on the road with his son Merle, and highlights of his career. Once again you hear Doc tell of how he learned the tunes that he has made famous and you get to hear Doc play them as the story unfolds. He plays everything from tunes that he played on the streets in Boone to the ones that propelled his career forward, like "Tennessee Stud."

Of special interest to readers of this magazine, Doc talks about how he learned to play the guitar and why the guitar became his instrument of choice. He talks about how he learned chords, how he learned how to hold a pick, and how he learned how to play fiddle tunes on the guitar. He also lends advice to young pickers about how they can best go about learning to play the guitar.

On disc number three Doc and David Holt perform live in Asheville, NC. The disc contains 18 tunes, some of them never before recorded by Doc, and it is Doc Watson at his best. As Doc said of the concert, "Everything came together for us that night."

As if the three CDs weren't enough, the folks at High Windy Audio went the extra mile and provided a 72-page companion book that is filled with historical photos, stories and interviews from Doc Watson, and dozens of quotes from Doc's family and friends.

All told what you get on these three CDs is a chronicle of Doc Watson's life told in his own words, a live Doc Watson concert, Doc performing a total of 34 songs, and a wonderfully designed 72-page booklet. Short of a private lesson at Doc's house, what more could a Doc Watson fan want?

Doc Watson has made a lot of recordings during a recording career that spans nearly 50 years. Most people who subscribe to this magazine no doubt own dozens of them. However, I think that this project will immediately rise to the top of Doc's long list of recordings as it is the only one that chronicles the life and music of a man who has been named one of America's true National Treasures. It is Doc Watson telling his own story. You can't get more authentic than that.

This three-CD set is now available from Flatpicking Mercantile. For more information about this project, visit:
www.docwatsonanddavidholt.com.

Orrin Star's
Flatpicking Guitar Primer
What The Tab Won't Tell You

A comprehensive introduction to bluegrass lead guitar playing by one of America's top flatpicking teachers, this video brings to light vital, yet often overlooked, subtleties that are at the heart of this exciting style—those things that the tablature won't tell you. Among them:

- how to think like a fiddler and get the "dance pulse" into your playing
- the central role of strums in lead playing (as applied to Carter-style and Blake-style)
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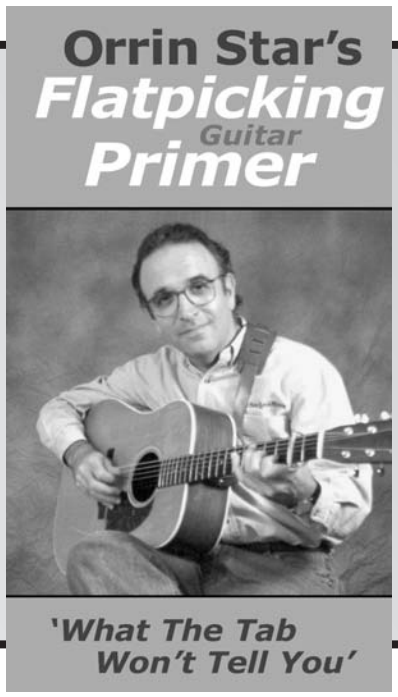

Larry Keel, Curtis Burch and The Experience
Larry Keel and Curtis Burch
Little King Records (LKE2K024)

Reviewed by Dan Miller

A week or two before Tony Rice came to our studio to play on Wyatt's rhythm guitar video he had played a set with the Larry Keel Experience at a festival in North Carolina. While he was unpacking his guitar and getting ready for the session I overheard him say to Wyatt, "Larry Keel has some good music in him!" A few weeks later I saw that Tony and Curtis Burch were going to be performing at Merlefest 2002 with Larry Keel. This morning I read a post on the Internet that Tony and Vassar Clements had just performed with Larry at a festival in Florida. The post said that "Tony and Vassar were smiling from ear-to-ear." Why are these bluegrass legends excited about playing music with Larry Keel? Tony said it best, "He has good music in him."

Larry Keel's newest release is a project that he and Curtis Burch have been working on for the past several years. The first thing that struck me about the recording was, "These guys are having a great time!" It is evident that all of the people on this record love making music and they love making that music together. It has a great feel.

Joining Larry (guitar) and Curtis (dobro) on this project are Jenny Keel on bass, Jason KreKel on mandolin, Billy Constable on banjo and mandolin, Woddy Woods on banjo, and Mark Schimick on mandolin. Curtis, Larry, Jenny, Woddy, and Jason share the lead and harmony vocal duties. Larry wrote four of the 14 songs and he sings lead on seven of the 13 vocal numbers. The one instrumental included is Tut Taylor's "Ridge Ramble."

The cover tunes include Dillard and Clark's "In The Plan," A.L. Woods' "Carolina Sunshine," the Everley Brothers' "Never Get On A Train Again," John Hartford's tunes "On The Road," and "First Girl I Ever Loved," the Shavers and Stover swing tune "Undecided," a tune by Curtis Burch, Same Bush and Mark Olson called "Pennies In My Pocket," and a version of "Copper Kettle" based on a Country Gentleman arrangement. The only traditional number included is a great vocal version of "Lil' Liza Jane."

On all of Larry Keel's projects my favorite cuts have been the ones that Larry has written and sings. It is no different with this one. I like Larry's voice and I like the power he puts into his original tunes. However, the variety of tunes here provides a really great mix. There are no weak numbers here.

Readers of this magazine are naturally going to be interested in Larry's guitar playing. I can tell you that Larry is a great guitar player and there is great guitar playing on this recording. However, to me Larry Keel's music is about the music, not the guitar playing. You don't listen to this music and say, "That was a cool lick!" Although the playing is top notch, somehow the process of trying to listen to and mentally analyze the solos takes me away from the feel of the music and I would rather feel Larry's music than analyze it. The best thing that a guitar player can learn from Larry Keel is not his note selection or licks, but his ability to express himself through his instrument.

There is a groove, a passion, and an emotion to Larry Keel's playing that you cannot capture by copying notes and licks. Guys like Tony Rice, Vassar Clements, and Curtis Burch have seen hundreds of technical wizards come and go through the course of their long and distinguished music careers. I would guess that they enjoy stepping out on stage with Larry Keel because of the groove and passion, not the note and licks. He does have good music in him, and the addition of groove master Curtis Burch and his great dobro playing on this project adds to the excitement.

If you like your music highly polished, slick, and smooth, then you might not like Larry Keel and Curtis Burch's latest offering. This is definitely not "ear candy." The music drips with a rough, raw, and gritty feel, but to me that is its greatest appeal. It's not technical music; it is groove music that reaches past the ears and extends its vibe down to your gut.

Instructional Book and Video Reviews

Jammin' The Blues Volumes 1 & 2

Rhythm Changes Volumes 1 & 2

by Frank Vignola
Mel Bay Publications

Reviewed by Chris Hale

Jammin' the Blues, Volumes 1 and 2, are intermediate level play-along Book/CD series by Frank Vignola. Each book features ten songs, each song with two lead breaks played by Frank Vignola, and at least five "jam breaks" for the guitar player to step out and improvise over. These songs are played in a cool-jazz-blues style that is very pleasant to listen to and learn. These books are not instructional books per se, but are instead presented in a learn-while-you-play format. Frank Vignola uses a lot of licks that are different from those common to flatpicking and therefore very useful to the fiddle-tune-style flatpicker who is interested in expanding his playing style. Blues is said to be the foundation of all American music, and I think a thorough knowledge in this area is useful in helping to improve your playing and understanding of American roots music.

Rhythm Changes Volume 1 and 2 (by Frank Vignola) expands the *Jammin' the Blues* series to include songs that do not follow the normal blues progressions. These songs feature common chord pro-

gressions that are found in most jazz songs. These different chord progressions create more room for improvising, and allow Frank Vignola to show us a wider range of notes than usual. Vignola usually plays in a closed scale position that is not hard to follow, and allows flatpicker who do not feel comfortable up the neck to overcome their fears gradually.

I have been playing along with these songs on the guitar, mandolin, and violin, and have thoroughly enjoyed them on all of the instruments. The series challenges the player's creativity and improvising skills while providing a solid backup. And Vignola's cool breaks are provided in the accompanying books in both tablature and musical notation.

A Flatpicking Sampler CD from *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* featuring 21 tunes as follows:

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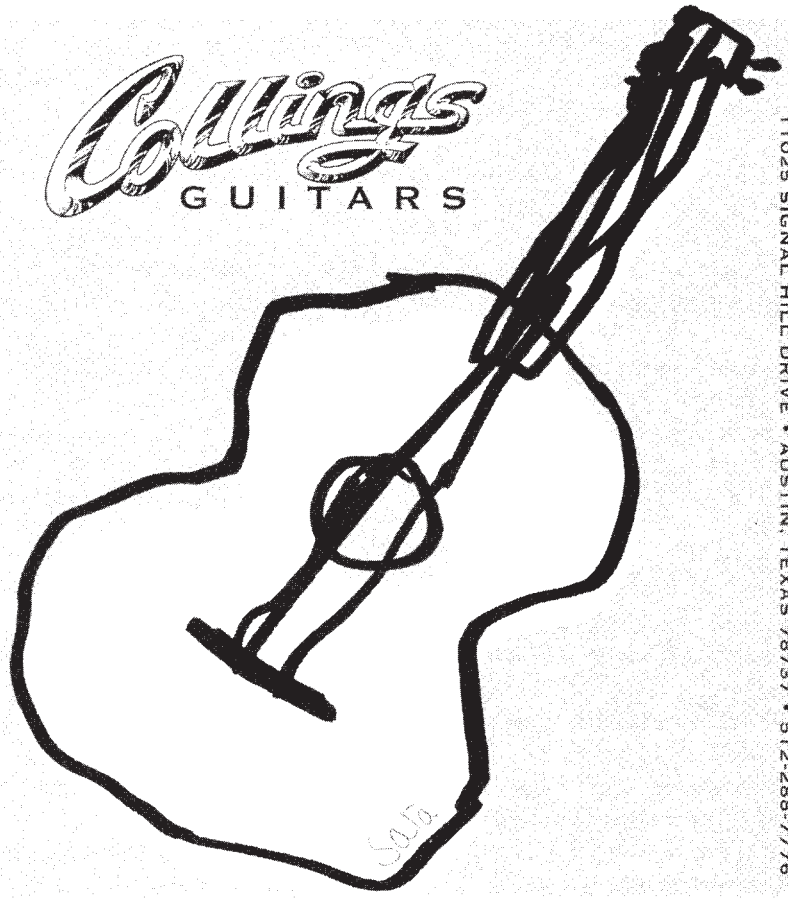

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by Bryan Kimsey

LR Baggs Gigpro and ParaAcoustic DI

I've spent the past several months with two of LR Baggs' pre-amps, the Para Acoustic DI and the Gigpro, using both to amplify the McIntyre Feather pickup and LR Baggs iBeam pickups. These are two different units with different goals and it's important to know what each will and will not do. First, why do you need a pre-amp? You need a pre-amp because your undersaddle or bridgeplate-mounted pickup doesn't have enough signal to produce a clean, acoustic sound all on its own. And even if you have an active pickup, such as the battery-powered iBeam, you still might want a pre-amp for its tone and volume controls. Now, I'm a notorious tight-wad and I've run pickups with out pre-amps for a long time. But, after using these two units and hearing the difference in sound, no more! Basically, if you use a pickup, you need a pre-amp.

Let's start with the Gigpro. The Gigpro is a small, belt-clipped unit about the size of two cassette cases taped together (I would say "about the size of a cigarette pack", but I don't want to encourage bad habits here.). It has a " In jack and a " Out jack. You plug your pickup into the In and run a lead from the Out to your amp. Setting your sound starts with the Gigpro's Gain control. You don't want to accidentally bump the Gain during a performance, so it's recessed and you pretty much set it early on and then use the Volume to control your actual volume. As those of you who are familiar with these things know, you can change the quality of your sound by experimenting with the ratio of Volume and Gain. While the actual dB of the sound might be the same, a hot Gain with soft Volume produces a different sound than a soft Gain and hot Volume. The instructions with the unit discuss this further. Also on the bottom of the unit is an Invert switch that you'd use if your guitar top and speaker cone vibrate in parallel with each other and thus feedback. On top, where you can easily access them, are the Volume knob and smaller treble and bass controls. All the controls have a wide range, and cranking the bass to 10 will give you BASS and cranking the treble to 10 will make your nose bleed. The Gigpro runs from

a single 9V battery and can serve as a phantom power for mini-mics.

The Para Acoustic DI is the Gigpro's bigger brother. It's about the size of 4 cassette boxes taped 2x2 (okay, okay, 2 packs of cigarettes) and, as befits its larger size, sits on the floor. Your initial reaction might be, as mine was, "forget that! I want it on my belt!", but wait! The Para Acoustic DI (PADI) is worthy, very worthy, of consideration. It has " In and Out jack, but it also has a " Effects loop that you may find handy if you run reverb or phase shifters or other effects. The PADI has an invert switch, too. On deck (where they're more easily accessed) are a row of knobs that control low, notch, mid, presence, and treble. The notch filter and middle are "sweepable" which means that you can define exactly what "middle" means. If you want your middle frequency control to be closer to the bass than the treble, for instance, you can control that. The notch filter is a highly specific filter that's useful for controlling feedback. Instead of decreasing a big chunk of "mid," you can use the notch filter to decrease a very narrow range of frequency and eliminate feedback without radically affecting the way your instrument sounds. "Presence" controls sounds like "sss" and "sizzle" and basically controls the apparent "brightness" of your instrument. If you're playing in a dead room, presence can make your instrument sound a little livelier. The PADI can also supply 48V phantom power for external mics.

All this is pretty impressive so far, but now we get to the real feature of the PADI and that's the XLR line-out. What this means is that you can run a mic cable directly from the unit to the mixing board and not have to deal with an amp or a microphone. And unlike running a " jack to the board, the XLR signal is much hotter and cleaner. You'll hear the difference. The PADI is so clean, in fact, that some people use it as a studio pre-amp, mixing their onboard pickup sound with a mic. I used the PADI several times to run directly to the board and was very pleased with the results. I did a couple of solo guitar gigs and the PADI, along with the McIntyre Feather and LR Baggs iBeam pickups (in two different guitars) gave me an excellent sound and I was free to move around onstage. Also, there's just something different about playing to an audience without a mic stand blocking the way. In a smaller venue, you can hear the actual guitar, if you keep the speaker levels down. It's both a visual and auditory difference. I personally control my volume with my right hand, just like I'd do in a jam session, and so having the PADI sitting on the floor turned out to be no hindrance at all. In fact, when I used the Gigpro, I found myself fiddling with the knobs too much and getting distracted that way!

Both units are made of extremely high-quality metals and plastics and are built for the road. Sound-wise, I thought the PADI actually sounded a little better. To confirm, I lent both units to my guitar pickin' UPS man for the weekend (he gigs every weekend) and he returned with the same report- the PADI sounds a little fuller in comparison with the Gigpro.

It should be pretty clear that I really liked the PADI and it gets my full recommendation. I would use the Gigpro if I were running exclusively to an amp, but like I said, I found that the easy access of the unit encouraged me to fiddle with it instead of focusing on playing guitar. The PADI is much more versatile in that it can pre-amp a signal going to an amp, go direct to the mixing board, or serve as a recording pre-amp. Highly recommended!

Guitar Review
- The Taylor Liberty Tree Guitar

by Kevin Stevenson

As readers of this magazine, we hold certain truths to be self-evident. First, we have a special interest in the steel string, wood box variety of the acoustic guitar. Most certainly we are players, possibly the owners of multiple guitars, maybe even builders, serious collectors, or dealers. We know about X-braces, bindings, scale lengths, nut widths, and exotic woods. We are, it is safe to say, enthusiasts.

But in addition to our interest in the acoustic guitar as an instrument, we're also drawn to styles of music that have their origins in the geographical places and chronological times that coincide with the origins of our country. The Europeans that colonized the eastern Americas brought with them the jigs, reels, hymns, and hornpipes of their homelands. These early American styles developed, cross-pollinated and grew into the folk, bluegrass, country, jazz, rock, etc. etc. that we now love to play on our cherished six-strings. Just as the musical styles of the colonies evolved, so also did the mindset and values of the early American settlers and pioneers, until a flame of revolution ignited and a new nation was born.

Because of our interest in the guitar as an instrument, and in the American story as a backdrop for the styles of music that we play, the Liberty Guitar from the folks at Taylor is an absolute "must see" for guitar enthusiasts like us.

The full story of the Liberty Tree Guitar is available in detail on Taylor's excellent website, (www.taylorguitars.com) but here's the condensed version: At the time of the American revolution (late 1700s) each of the thirteen colonies had a special tree designated as the Liberty Tree, under which the local patriots would gather to plan and under take the rebellion. In 1999 the last remaining, original Liberty Tree, in Annapolis Maryland, was destroyed beyond saving by Hurricane Andrew. Bob Taylor and his crew were able to obtain enough of the wood from this 400-year-old tulip poplar to do a production run of fine guitars. And what a guitar Bob has created.

My own vision of a patriotic guitar would fall some where between "Buck Owens' Red White and Blue" and parade bunting from *The Music Man*! What Taylor has created is far more refined and dignified. The tastefulness and elegance of his design is truly fitting for a guitar that represents so many cherished values and ideals. The flag motifs on the headstock and sound hole are designs that suggest the early colonies. The laser inscribed scroll flows off of the fingerboard and onto the guitar's top in a dramatic, but tasteful statement of our nation's foundation of constitutional rights, laws, and freedoms.

If the Liberty Guitar is visually inspiring, then it's equally remarkable as a musical instrument. So much about a guitar's tone is subjective that I hesitate trying to describe its sound. The Liberty Tree guitar that I played for about an hour was as delightful a playing experience as I've ever had. The poplar back and side responded much like walnut: not a deep, boomy low end, but lots of volume for a small body guitar. I flatpicked it and did some finger picking as well, and found the tone clean, musical and responsive. I imagine the tops that Bob personally selected for these special guitars were the "best of the best", as the tone of the one I played was truly special.

The only visual flaw was the zigzag headstock joint featured on all of Taylor's "New Technology" three-piece neck designs. This innovative new neck design is a story unto itself, and my understanding is that the three-piece neck is what allows Taylor to create such uniquely fine instruments in the numbers and at the pace of a large factory. The bookmatched poplar back had striking figures of blonde and dark coffee colored wood. Every detail spoke of the heirloom quality of the instrument.

Imagine wood from a tree that was there when our country was born, wood whose fibers actually felt the vibrations of the patriots voices as they spoke of freedom and self rule. And imagine holding that guitar, that wood, in your lap and hearing the sweet pure musical tones of a heartfelt song. The Liberty Tree Guitar is a very special gift from Taylor to all us who love the guitar. I'm sure the Liberty Tree Guitars will be expensive. They are, after all a collector's dream. But if the steel string guitar is a part of your life, and if you are one of the fortunate few that have enjoyed the blessings of a free society, then you owe yourself the treat of seeking out an opportunity to see first hand the Liberty Tree Guitar.

Guitar Review

- 2001 Martin D-18 GE

by Mike Whitehead

Remember how you felt the week before Christmas when you were 10 years old? The anticipation of the Remington 552BDL Speedmaster .22 caliber rifle controlled your every thought. That's what must be in the long, foil-wrapped box. After all, you had been saving empty tin cans and plastic bottles since Labor Day just in case your parents forgot what you wanted more than anything in the whole world. That is how we felt when we ordered a new Martin D-18 Golden Era guitar from Elderly. As usual, the staff was knowledgeable, courteous, and in tune with our needs. The box arrived about four days later and was ripped open in less time than it takes a redbone hound to swallow a ham biscuit.

My initial impressions: Great case. Guitar looks good. Action is a little high. Sounds pretty good, but lacks some expected brightness. As I began to change strings to help the treble, I noticed three opportunities: 1) the bridge pin holes were not tapered; 2) the plastic bridge pins were deeply slotted; and 3) the bridge was not slotted for the strings. In my opinion, a better arrangement is a tapered hole, unslotted pin, and a bridge slotted to accept the string. This could help prevent possible damage to the bridgeplate over time as the pins deform and the ball ends of the strings rub on the plate. This guitar had potential, but needed a minor tune up. I left her in the capable hands of Lynn Dudenbostel and asked him to: lower the saddle height, adjust nut slots as needed, taper bridge pin holes and slot the front edge of hole, install unslotted vintage style ebony bridge pins, and install a matching ebony strap button. This type of tune up should cost no more than about $100 in most areas. But be aware: any type of modification can affect the warranty of an instrument. I picked the guitar up a few days later and examined it more closely.

The top was well-quartered red spruce, sporting nice grain width with a few expected cosmetic imperfections and a vintage looking pick guard. The quartered Honduras mahogany back and sides were very nice. The bridge was ebony, as was the graduated dot fingerboard. The nice feeling 1.75" V-shaped neck had an adjustable truss rod and the nut and saddle were made of …bone. The fit and finish of the entire guitar was excellent. An added bonus was a perfect neck angle and six smoooooth turning Waverly tuners. Mmmmmm. I felt my pulse rate and saliva production increase. This experience reminded me of one of my many adventures on a Harley Davidson. I feel the wind on my face as I roll the throttle back. The big 1450cc V twin accelerates me to 40, 50, 60 miles per hour! Then my heart skips a beat as I hear the showroom manager yell "Hey you! Off the bike! Can't you read the signs?" But I digress.

Mike Whitehead with his D-18 GE

My first post tune up G strum was memorable. This was a wonderful guitar …and sounded kind of…old. My friends and I put a lot of miles on the odometer over the next couple of weeks. She was young and supple. She was powerful, but inexperienced. "Ding" (as we named her) just kept getting better. Finally, we decided this guitar was ready for the BBT (Big Bluegrass Test). After a few minutes of silent prayer and meditation, I carefully inserted a CD which contained some of my favorite guitar tones of all time. One particular cut says it all when it comes to monster guitar tone. This was my big moment. With Ding in my arms, I *was* Del McCoury playing Get Down On Your Knees And Pray. Ronnie's incredible mandolin solo was being driven by MY right hand…right there in my own living room. Oh yes. It was a good day in Miketown. A couple hours later, I had played two sets with the McCoury boys, and ended the night filling in for Pat Enright with the Nashville Bluegrass Band. Outside of being Tommy Emmanuel for a day (or possibly Dennis Rodman during the Carmen Electra days), how much better could it be? (I highly recommend a good guitar and an active imagination to all of you. It really helps take the edge off a rough day at work).

I have been fortunate to have access to some of the world's finest vintage and custom instruments. It is rare that I get too excited over a new production guitar. This is an exception. This is truly a wonderful guitar, and just as important, a great value. One would be hard pressed to find a better guitar for anywhere near the price. I have played four recent D-18 Golden Eras and all were excellent. Thank you Mr. Martin for a fine guitar at a fair price. If you will taper and slot those bridge pin holes and spring for some ebony bridge pins, I'll buy you dinner the next time you're in Knoxville.

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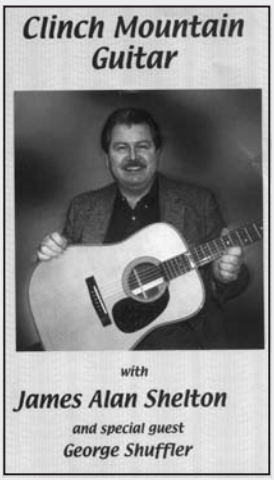

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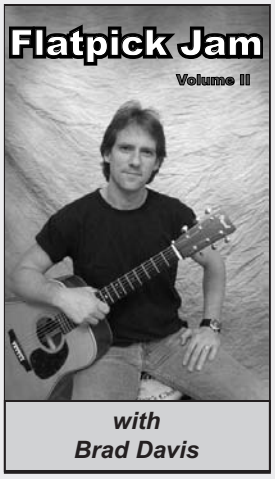

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"My friends all laughed when I said 'I'll sing harmony.' But they didn't know my secret..."

I never was any kind of singer, I could play a few instruments okay, but when everybody leaned their heads together for some harmonizing, I just didn't fit in. I couldn't hear what vocal went where! I just figured it took talent to be able to sing harmony, and I didn't have it.

Then I met this guy at the festival in Bean Blossom. We were doing a little shade-tree picking, and he was singing wonderfully. When we finished "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," he asked me why I didn't join in on harmony.

"I can't harmonize," I said. "I didn't want to mess up your singing by sounding like a bullfrog in heat."

"Sure you can harmonize! Why, I'd even give you this guitar if I can't teach you right now how to do the tenor harmony!"

Well, he had me singing a good tenor harmony so easily I just couldn't believe it. Singing harmony was a skill, not a big mystery!

"How did you learn to teach harmony like that?"

"It's not hard," he replied. "let me loan you my CDs, and you'll see my secret."

He handed me a CD pack entitled "how To Sing Bluegrass Harmony"--a mail-order course! I never bought a mial-order course. I just couldn't thrust I'd get good instruction from something I couldn't try out right away.

He told me, "This course came with a guarantee...if I didn't think it was good within 10 days, I'd get my money back. And it couldn't hurt to try it with a guarantee!"

"But you could sing harmony a little, so you could learn quicker--"

"nope! I sang harmonhy like a bullfrog in heat, too!"

We laughed, and he left me with a cheerful, "Try those tapes out."

Well, I played that course all the way home in my car, and I sang til I was hoarse. I sure felt like I was learning... but the real test was yet to come.

Next Tuesday I met with my pickin" buddies, like I always do. Just before we started "Fox On The Run," I told my friends I was going to sing harmonhy. They all laughed (I knew they would), and Charlie cracked, "What kind of harmony? Froggy tenor?"

"Let's just do it," Isaid. "I got a surprise for you boys."

They kept giggling, but you should've seen their faces when I started singing harmony. They were amazed. Charlie even accused me of getting 'harmony surgery' instead of going to Bean Blossom. Naturally, they all wanted to learn mhy secret. I just smiled, and said "Harmony singing is a skill as much as a gift. And this course got me working mhy skill the right way."

If you never thought you could sing bluegrass harmony, you ought to try this course. It's guaranteed. And who knows---your "bullfrog tenor" days may soon be over!

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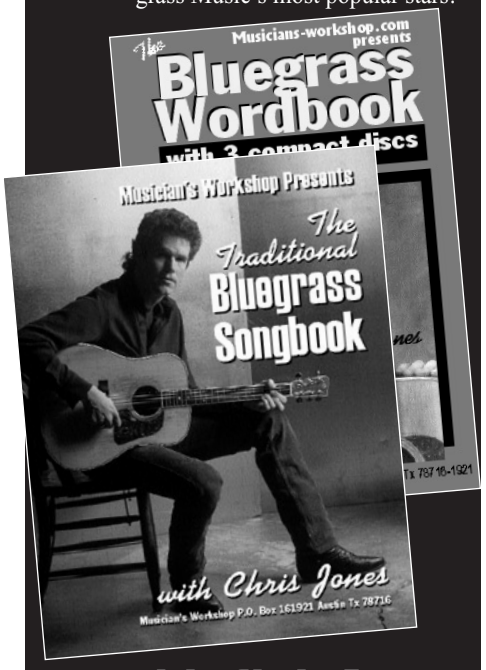

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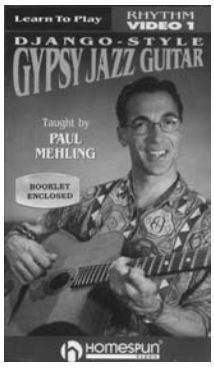

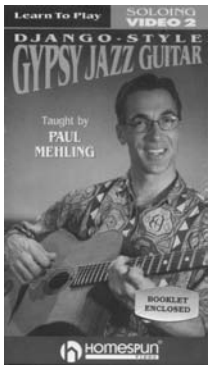

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